

*Always forgive your enemies - nothing annoys them so much.*

--- E. M. Kelly

## The Shillong Times

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### A medical emergency

THAT in this day and age people can still die of food poisoning means that our public health system is unable to deal with medical emergencies and that people too are unaware about first aid practices and how to deal with such situations. The Deputy Commissioner, Ri Bhoi said that those who organised the church service at Nongkya village in Ri Bhoi district never sought official permission although there was a gathering of nearly 2000 people at the venue. Perhaps there is no precedence for getting permission from the district administration for church services but perhaps this incident would serve as a lesson for the administration to keep itself on alert in case of any human or medical emergencies. At a gathering of so many people if anything untoward happens and the administration is not informed then it becomes difficult to manage the disaster. Incidentally we are prone to think that disaster only means an earthquake, landslip, cyclonic storms and the like. What happened at Ri Bhoi is a health disaster that claimed 8 lives and perhaps more. That some of the patients had to be brought all the way to Shillong Civil Hospital means that the Nongpoh Civil Hospital could not handle the cases or did not have the wherewithal required or adequate beds to accommodate all patients. To bring patients who are in a critical situation all the way to Shillong means loss of precious time.

These are issues that should not be forgotten after this is all over. Its fair that an enquiry will be conducted into the food poisoning incident to find out the exact cause so that similar fatal incidents are not repeated. Over and above that anyone who organises any large scale gathering has to inform the respective district administrations so that no time is lost in addressing such emergencies should they recur at any time in the future.

### LOOKING BACK

April 14, 1989

### Meghalaya Assembly Concern over drug abuse

The growing incidence of drug abuse in the State was viewed with concern in the State Legislature on Tuesday. Moving a private members motion to discuss measures to be taken to check the drug menace in the state, Mr E K Mawlong (HSPDP) said that parents in Shillong and the State as a whole were worried that their children might get addicted to drugs. Several members participated in the discussion. The availability of various drugs, ganja, bhang, hashish, heroin was discussed as also the sale of habit forming medications. It was generally felt that though the problem has not yet reached serious proportions, the proximity of Meghalaya to the Golden Triangle and the increasing use of narcotics among adolescents, needs urgent attention.

The reasons behind drug abuse we many, the increased competitions in High Schools and Universities, increased stress, and the increase in income were among the reasons cited. Youngsters today have far more pocket money, and in many cases, scholarships and stipends given to tribal students, "never really reached home" a member pointed out. The drug menace could not be contained s long as there was a demand for drugs. Parental negligence, peer group pressure, were also responsible, and members felt that a "war on drugs" had to be declared. Suggestions to combat drugs were given, among which the creation of more "outlets" for adolescents like sports and games, firm monitoring of addictive medicines in pharmacies, stern action against drug peddlers, were mooted.

Minister for Health Mrs M War expressed solidarity

with the views of the members and said that the health department would do all within power, to check the menace. Home Minister Mr D D Lapang spoke of the narcotics cell and said that police officers were being given courses to combat drug trafficking. Members who participated in the discussion were: Mr B B Lyngdoh (HPU-B), Mr S D Kongwir (HPU), Mr P R Kyndiah (Cong), Mr J M Pariat (HSPDP-DL), Mr S L Marbanigan (HSPDP-DL).

### Decree of prohibition

Liquor shops (and vide parlours) in Nagaland were closed from April 1 last, in compliance with a demand of the Nagaland Baptist Church Council and some other social and voluntary organizations. None of the licenses for sale of liquor and commercial screening of video films, which expired on March 31, was renewed, a bold decision indeed by every count. Mr Jamir, the pragmatic Chief Minister back on his lost goddee, must have thought discretion to be the better part of valour and not dared to question the powerful Baptist Church. The Church in Mizoram also put up the same demand and it is common knowledge how Mr Laidenga's ignoring the Church diktat cost him his office through a fateful general election which re-established the Church supremacy once again in that State, whatever may be the other readings of the popular vote. In Mr Jamir's case it has been much easier to accept the Church demand rather meekly. The election is over and hence he need not have to be thinking too much of the reaction the closure decision would have on the electorate.

# Needed a 'Smart State' not 'Smart City' Mr Chief Minister!

By Lakhan Kma

nexus between those in government and these companies?

Secondly, the lack of basic health services in the rural areas is a major concern. One has to rush to the city hospitals even for some common illness. Who will explain the logic of having operation theatres in Nongpoh/ Nongstoin district hospitals with no specialist and thereby lying idle? Or having ultrasound machine in Nongpoh hospital which is not registered and hence unusable or an X-ray machine at Bhoirymbong CHC which is not registered and lying idle or having blood storing equipment in Nongpoh/ Nongstoin hospitals with blood bank under construction. More bizarre scenario is to have a CT scan of Rs. 1.12 crores in Tura district hospital which is non-functional since its installation in April 2006. Who is answerable for these mindless and wasteful expenditures to the tune of several crores when an average villager is denied basic medical care in his/her village? The fact is unprofessional management of our health care system is killing it and a naive populace will continue to suffer.

Another issue is the lack of composite planning of livelihood missions in villages. Look at the Meghalaya State Aquaculture Mission of the last 5 years. There were no takers for it yet this government is coming out with another mission called Meghalaya State Livestock Mission with an earmark of Rs. 1000 crores. With a deficit budget year after year only God knows from where the money will come. The Government has to realize the strengths and weaknesses of different regions of the State without generalize everything. Take for example the Meghalaya State Aquaculture Mission; it was destined to fail in East Khasi Hills with lack of abundant availability of perennial water bodies or climatic conditions or limited species of fishes, but had the potential to succeed in Garo Hills areas with suitable climate, topography and availability of plentiful water bodies and fish varieties. But alas, it was not run in mission mode and hence was bound to fail. Lack of livelihoods in the rural areas had forced the villagers to greener

pastures in the city adding to its ever increasing problems.

The HSLC results indicate that there is no dearth of hardworking and intelligent students in the nook and corners of our State, yet we had school dropouts of over 1 lakhs between the years 2012-16. From the day the results are declared, those who can afford will rush to Shillong for admission to various +2 schools and colleges. Why is a government higher secondary school or colleges in their own village/ town not the first preference for the students? Even with good infrastructure, well-paid and job-secured faculty and staff, these institutes are not the preferred choice for the students. Is it that the government assured job security itself has become a deterrent for its own growth and thereby failed to attract and retain students with time? Is government apathy towards improving the education scenario in our schools and colleges in semi-urban or rural areas contributing to school dropouts? The answer is perhaps-yes.

Another issue that highlights the lack of concern and smartness on the part of government is the implementation and running of JNNURM buses. Hundreds of these buses are unusable within 2 to 7 years due to lack of proper maintenance. Who is answerable? Perhaps it is the government of India who has so generously given the State government Rs. 30-40 crores in 7 years to purchase these 256 odd vehicles. Under shady deals with certain NGOs, the MoA between the State government and Ministry of Urban Development, Govt. of India has been violated resulting into hundreds of them lying unusable in different nooks and corners of the city. The irony of its implementation is that while hundreds of these buses choke the Motphran point every day, 20 persons were killed in the 1st week of March this year since there was no public bus available to them and they were at the mercy of a drunken truck driver while travelling from their village to attend a Youth Synod in West Khasi Hills.

The lack of vision and mission of our government can be reflected in its hurry to create more and more districts and C & RD blocks. It does not make much sense for a tiny state like

Meghalaya with an area of 24,429 Sq Km area and a population of 29,64,007 to have 11 districts and 43 C & RD blocks (perhaps more to be added). While it might look politically correct, it is certainly bad economics. With every addition of new districts and C & RD blocks, the administrative cost simply doubles whereas the earnings of the State is sliding with every passing year as indicated by the annual budget. How will contractually appointed officers render their services to the people of the new districts or C & RD Blocks. When regular employees with all the facilities do not deliver the goods, it will be naive to expect the contractual appointees to deliver. It is a folly to believe that more and more administrative units will improve the delivery system in governance. Rather, we are only going to pass the buck and nothing is going to change on the ground. In a fund-crunched State like ours, judicious and optimum use of our resources and plugging the loopholes is the only way out. By being politically correct, we cannot shy away from our responsibilities. How difficult it is to provide equitable distribution of developmental activities without being biased or having ulterior motives. The demand for separate districts/blocks can be circumvented by bringing equitable development of all areas falling under it.

I have only touched upon some of the issues to highlight my point that our State government is not so smart. Time has come where government should focus its energy and resources to develop the rural areas and arrest this pattern of plight of the village folks to urban centres. Let us recollect what Mahatma Gandhi has envisaged that until there is upliftment of the rural population and villages, our nation cannot prosper. In was true then, it is still a truth for the country as a whole and for the State of Meghalaya in particular. What Meghalaya requires are smart citizens and smarter politicians for a really smart Meghalaya. When the entire State has become smart, we will have several smart places, not just one or two.

*(The author teaches History in NEHU)*

# Centre has to work for political solution in Kashmir

By Kalyani Shankar

The situation in Kashmir is getting worse every day with the misguided and frustrated youth taking to streets and pelting stones at the armed forces, which are using force to quell the dissent. Due to continued hostility since the killing of Burhan Wani last July by security forces, militants and the youth have started targeting police and security forces. The situation as some Kashmir experts feel, is worse than in 1990 when the militancy was at its height.

Almost three generations of Kashmiris have now seen militancy and most of their children had missed their childhood growing up in a state of fear and frustration which is why the Burhan Wani have sprung up. Today, they are proud to be stone - pelters and even ready to die. Even women and school going children are out on the streets.

Why is this state of affairs? The first is that the first ever PDP- BJP coalition government has not yet settled down though it is almost two and a half years since it came to power. As the former RAW chief A.S. Daulat said in a recent interview "what's happening now is different

security forces. As the separatist leader Geelani notes that "despite (the government) utilising all its resources and military might during the last 70 years, the issue is there and not an iota of change seems (to have happened) on the ground." He is daring the BJP to hold a referendum.

So what is the solution? The future looks bleak unless there is some out of the box thinking. As the Northern Army Commander Lieutenant General D.S. Hooda had pointed out recently, if the people are not on the side of the government nothing can be done. He merely echoed what Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel said in 1948 that "Some people consider that a Muslim majority area must necessarily belong to Pakistan. They wonder why we are in Kashmir. The answer is plain and simple. We are in Kashmir because the people of Kashmir want us to be there."

Secondly, there is a fundamental difference in their approach for a solution. While Mehbooba feels that dialogue is the only way out, the BJP wants a muscular policy and believes that the violence is only due to Pakistan, ISI or

**The path ahead is not bright. There are many expert committee reports on Kashmir, which needs to be looked again.. Back channel negotiations with Pakistan should also be resumed. There should be efforts to involve all stake- holders and political parties. Before all these, confidence building measures need to be taken up to assuage the feelings of the Kashmiris.**

(from 1990). It springs from 2014 elections. That election actually didn't satisfy anybody. The BJP was looking at mission 44, they got 25 seats, PDP was dreaming of 45 seats they got 28 seats. Mufti Sayeed had no option but to tie up with the BJP." The alliance has just not worked.

Despite all her good intentions, chief minister Mehbooba Mufti has not been able to deliver so far. She has too many problems within her party and outside. The first is to keep her party untied and the second is to make sure that the BJP-PDP combination worked at the ground level. This has not happened because of the inherent contradictions between the two partners and their ideologies.

The Centre as well as the state failed to deal with the consequences of the killing of the Burhan Wani on July 7 last year and the discontent is still simmering with many more Burhan Wani's springing up. They failed to engage the frustrated youth. The result is that Pakistan is making use of the discontent.

One was hoping that during the winter the situation would improve due to the heavy snow in the valley but the militant activities had only increased. What should be worrying is that the local militants are growing in number and are willing to take on the security forces. The second is the level of mass interference during the security operations against the militants. Because of these, the task of the security forces is more difficult as they cannot shoot unarmed people indiscriminately. The result is the confrontation between the youth and the

ISIS and so repression should be intensified. The Centre is not willing to resume dialogue with Pakistan demanding that Pakistan interference should be stopped before that.

Ultimately, as many Kashmir experts believe the solution has to be political. As National Conference president Farooq Abdullah claims that "Kashmir is a political issue and needs to be resolved on first priority so that people in the state can live in peace. As long as its resolution is delayed, the situation is bound to deteriorate further instead of getting back on track." The other two stake holders - the Congress and the National Conference are busy faulting the Centre and the state government.

It is true that it is not easy to find a solution in a day but the government should explore available options. The path ahead is not bright. There are many expert committee reports on Kashmir, which needs to be looked again.. Back channel negotiations with Pakistan should also be resumed. There should be efforts to involve all stake- holders and political parties. Before all these, confidence building measures need to be taken up to assuage the feelings of the Kashmiris. The Centre seems to think that brutal force of the security forces is the solution while the problem lies elsewhere. It is crying for a political solution. It is imperative that the Centre and the State governments should ensure at least there is no escalation of violence. Mehbooba needs the unstinted support from the Centre if she has to succeed and adopt a healing touch to assuage the feelings of the hurt youth. (IPA Service)

### TO THE EDITOR

### Another spelling error in MBOSE book

Editor,

In spite of so many criticisms by different people on social media particularly in newspapers on different errors committed by MBOSE officials in these past coming months, like leakage of question papers of Class IX and especially on the recent SSLC results where the list of toppers had leaked before the official declaration of results. There is also another silly spelling mistake in the new social science book of Class VIII, page no. 246. In the column which shows the Preamble to the Constitutions of India, instead of 'belief' it is written as 'brief' and instead of 'Republic' it is written as 'Republc'. As an educationist I am worried as to how we are going to teach our younger generation if this happens again and again. And when will MBOSE learn from its mistakes? As the saying goes, 'Mistakes are the stepping stones to success' but it seems this quotation does not apply to our Board here in Meghalaya. I would

humbly request the MBOSE officials to go for a thorough proof-reading of any book that is prescribed to our students under MBOSE.

Yours etc.,  
Aiborlang Nongsiej,  
Viaemail

### Save the girl child!

Editor,

Kudos to Salil Gewali for his letter, "Women not safe at home too!" (ST, May 30, 2017). As a matter of fact, girls first of all need to be protected from their very biological parents. Surprisingly, parents kill their girl child when she is in the womb of her mother (foeticide) or in the cradle in her own home (infanticide) or when she is at the prime of her youth (honour killing). Internationally, 20 per cent of honour killings are being staged in our own backyards in the name of caste, class and religion. And child sex ratio has come down from 945 girls for 1000 boys in 1991 to 927 in 2001 to 914 in 2011 census. A quick justice delivery system is needed to arrest such practices.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Kolakata

### Ganol Project hangs in the balance

Editor,

The state government had recently informed in the Assembly that the Ganol Hydro Project is going to be completed by 2018. The statement was perhaps made on the basis of the information provided by MeECL. However, as a resident of the area it appears to me very doubtful that it would be completed by that date as the construction activities are very tardy. It does not appear that a big project is underway as the machinery and the labourers engaged are very minimal and do not seem to very efficient. Some building constructions are seen to have more manpower than what is seen in this project.

Further, this apprehension would not be far-fetched as it is learnt that the managers of this project have very little experience in the design and construction of hydro electric projects. The Director, the Chief Engineer, the Project Manager and even the Executive Engineers are believed to have no experience in the execution of such projects. It is also surprising and shocking to learn that both the Executive

Engineers are not even graduates and are therefore not competent to carry out such construction activities and that too without any past experience. Further it is also learnt that the MeECL had recently posted an Additional Chief Engineer to oversee the project, which is also questionable. This officer was said to have been transferred from New Umtru Project in January 2017 when the project was due to be commissioned by March, 2017. It is quite irregular to remove the Project Manager when the project is at its final stage and at a crucial juncture. The big question is, if there is something amiss with the handling of the New Umtru Project by this officer that warranted his removal. And why was he sent to head the Ganol Project? If that is not the case, then why was he removed since we have not heard that the New Umtru Project has been commissioned.

The apathy and the lack of professionalism by the management of MeECL in the construction of the Ganol Project raises serious doubts about whether the Project will be completed on time.

Yours etc.,  
J. A. Sangma  
Rongkhon, Tura

*“Adopt the pace of nature; her secret is patience.”*

--- Thomas S. Monson

## The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, FRIDAY, JUNE 2, 2017

### The Ayodhya issue

UTTAR Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was the first CM to visit the disputed Ram Janmabhoomi in 15 years. It was a day after a special CBI court in Lucknow framed charges of criminal conspiracy in the Babri mosque demolition case against top BJP leaders including L.K. Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharti. Adityanath met the senior leaders before they appeared in court. During his visit to Ayodhya, the CM was accompanied by Dharam Das who was also one of the accused. It shows the BJP's partisan attitude. Adityanath offered prayers on the banks of the Surya river. He did not meet the Muslim leaders involved in the dispute. That goes against the Supreme Court decision that the dispute should be settled in an impartial manner. The CM would do well to be friendly towards the Muslim leaders. That would also persuade the contending parties to be reasonable and understanding about the conflict.

The CM's visit to Ayodhya appears to be part of a grand design. Since the BJP came to power in UP after a decisive victory in March, four UP Cabinet Ministers visited the Makeshift Temple in Ayodhya. This is in complete disregard of the fact that it is a disputed site. The revival of the controversy seems to obscure more important economic issues. Employment for youth is a burning issue. Industrial and agricultural growth is also of the utmost importance and Mulayam Singh Yadav has aggravated the crisis saying shooting of Kar-Sevaks on the mosque was a mistake!

### LOOKING BACK

April 14, 1989

### Bodo militants attack police parties

The Bodo extremists continued their attacks on the police in several Bodo inhabited areas of Assam official reports here today said. About one hundred armed Bodo extremists attacked a police party and opened fire at Amlaiguri and Simlaguri areas in Kokrajhar district yesterday. Police returned the fire but no casualty was reported. However, five extremists were arrested on the spot. Earlier, the police party which went on a search operation recovered two pipes guns, a few cartridges and some gun making material the reports said. Some other extremists attacked an Assam Rifles patrol party near the Eastern Cabin of Salakati Station in Kokrajhar district this

morning when the jawans opened fire, one extremists, Manik Basumatary was injured. He was also arrested. Another group of 14 run wielding extremists wearing khaki uniform raided the house of one Rajendra Thakuria of Rupathi village in Barpeta district and snatched his gun and three cartridges. Meanwhile The Assam Government today renewed its invitation to the All Bodo Students Union (Upendra Faction) for talks on their demands without any pre-condition. In a letter to ABSU vice-president Pradeep Kumar Diamary, Home Minister Bhriгу Kumar Phukan and the government was prepared to discuss its various demands at any time convenient for both sides.

### TO THE EDITOR

### Save us from noise pollution!

Editor,

Among the various types of pollution, least attention is paid to noise pollution. because the damage caused by other forms of pollution are identifiable and liability thereof could be fixed. However, in case of noise pollution the damage caused is invisible but the damage caused is irreparable. It is a commonly known fact, that noise pollution affects our auditory system and mental health and the damage caused is permanent.

Nowadays there is a growing trend amongst youth to have a loud music system in their vehicles which is also otherwise considered as a status symbol. Vehicles both private and commercial with high and loud music system having woofers are found playing in our city with loud blaring music causing much annoyance to pedestrians and others due to high base with vibrating effect. When these errant vehicles with loud woofers pass through residential areas, markets, hospital zones, educational institutions etc., the effect of the sound produced is unbearable and people coming within the range of such music system are very

disturbed. The vulnerable victim of this noise pollution are infants, toddlers, the aged and infirm and the sick in our home and neighbourhoods who are put to severe discomfort. A good numbers of vehicles using woofers are regularly plying in Polo, Golf Links, P y n t h o r b a h , Nongmynsong, Umpling (particularly the water carrying vehicles) and adjacent areas. Several educational institutes exist in the above areas and during school hours when these high noise producing vehicles pass by the school areas, it temporarily halts the normal classroom activities and this happens throughout the day. I wonder who has given these errant car owners/drivers the right/license to create noise pollution thereby putting at stake the mental health of the general public. There is an urgent need to curb the menace of loud music played in vehicles, otherwise it would be too late for any remedial measures.

Through your esteemed column, I wish to draw the attention of our Deputy Commissioner, Superintendent of Police, District Transport Authority, State Pollution Control Board, Officer-in-Charge/Traffic Incharge of all the Police Stations at Shillong

# Of 'national' spoke-persons and political slugfests

By Patricia Mukhim

In these tempestuous times it is difficult to keep up with who said what. There is a judge of a High Court who has insulted the poor peacock and turned it into a castrated sanyasi of sorts that procreates through its tears. Such mumbo-jumbo is a slur even to Hindu mythology. And to think that such a judge presided over a high court! Indeed one's senses are continually assaulted by cantankerous social media users without the grace of language. They believe that generous use of swear words borrowed from that country which appropriately represents 'Empire' in its power and might, actually embodies a modern, intellectual culture. That such people even carry the sobriquet of scholars and regularly torpedo the idea of democracy makes us vulnerable to schizophrenia. The cacophony is enough to send you reeling with vertigo.

But let me come to the substantive part of this article. So we have a slew of national spokespersons of 'national' parties bombarding us with their brand of politics. Each one is trying to outdo the other in a competition on who cares more for the people of Meghalaya; who is taking away jobs; who is defrauding the exchequer and who is more democratic and liberal than the other. Both spokespersons fulminated thunderously and as can be expected the BJP which wants to establish itself as a new governing structure has painted the Congress as the villain of the piece while the defendant spokesperson tries to not only deflect all the pot-shots taken at his party but also launch his own litany of tirade against his competitor. This is the first round of the match; the teaser so to say. Narendra Modi has not even landed in Shillong or Tura or Jowai or Nongpoh or Nongstoin as yet. That's when the blitzkrieg will start; the voluble thundering will begin and the ruling party of Meghalaya will be torn to shreds.

This time it was Nalin Kohli and Gaurav Gogoi both 'national' spokespersons for their respective parties that thundered at each other

from different platforms. I would have loved to watch the Gogoi scion - a product of dynasty and with little exposure to the real problems of the hoi-polloi take on the articulate legal eagle, Nalin Kohli from the same platform. That would be intuitive. A political debate is not necessarily a sparring match where two people respond to each others' cat-calls. An enlightened debate is uplifting and educative and throws light without generating too much heat. In this case Gaurav Gogoi is only reacting to Nalin Kohli's litany of allegations heaped on the Congress. The war of words between the BJP and Congress stems from one party whitewashing its past sins and the other promising the good governance model - sub ka saath-sub ka vikas. The Congress has not coined any slogans yet and nor has it reinvented itself and sadly it does not even realise that nostalgia does not win elections; the promise of solutions to problems and better times ahead does. The beef ban is about the only stick which the Congress has at the moment to beat the BJP with.

The tragedy of our times is that all political parties will embrace obscurantism if it promises to bring them to power. On the part of the Congress, it has failed to understand the political calculus that drives party politics. You cannot win elections without a dedicated cadre to take your message to the last mile. Over the years the Congress primary units have weakened and those who have supported the party feel betrayed when they are forgotten by the powers that be. In politics the chief minister is also the person who rallies the party flock together by being accessible and by acknowledging the efforts of those who keep the party wheels oiled. In all these years the Congress is led by a person who is no longer compos mentis and is hardly someone that the youth can rally round because of the huge age

difference. But try telling that to the Congress High Command. There is no meaningful mobilization and grass-roots engagement and after 2014 the Congress seems to have sunk into the cesspit of déjà-vu of, "that was how it was when we ruled this country." But déjà-vu can only take the party thus far. One wonders after whom the deluge!

The BJP has a clear advantage in terms of its branding here since it has no history yet of ruling Meghalaya except for that brief wedlock with the regional parties in 1998 - 2001. The Congress on the other hand is a history-sheeter when it comes to corruption and bad governance. The party is infamous for its failed, delayed and incomplete projects (remember the Nangalibra Thermal Power Projects and all the machinery that has turned into scrap? And also the Nongshram Bamboo Chips project amongst others. Who pays/paid for all that?). No one asks questions on these failed projects, on bad roads, on polluted water supplied to our homes, on the failed solid waste management system, or the abattoir that is taking ages to complete, as if, having a time line for project completion in this state is not part of good governance!

Add to this the fact that we don't yet have robust civil societies to challenge government through alternative research but that you have instead pressure groups with expertise in lobbying petrol bombs on the eve of elections so that some vested interests can ride on the bandwagon of a fear psychosis inflicted on a vulnerable electorate. An electorate that believes it is in needs of warriors to protect itself. But protect from whom? From the ubiquitous outsider? Is the outsider the enemy here? Was the outsider vested with power and resources to govern this state? Isn't the outsider the underdog here? Did he not pay with his life during the Inner Line Permit agitation? Have the perpetrators of that heinous crime been arrested and

charge-sheeted? No they never are and no one in these many years has questioned the Meghalaya police for its dismal conviction rates! Is this governance? Is this what the Congress will repeat for another five years as Gaurav Gogoi claims? One must fear the fact that the absence of the rule of law will eclipse every other tenet of democracy. And the Congress has proven it to us in all these years that it cares zilch for the rule of law. A tainted Home Minister still rules the roost, lest we forget. And we are great ones for selective amnesia!

For too long the people of Meghalaya have put politics at the centre of their psychological, emotional and even spiritual consciousness but have not used reason to question political misdemeanors. Politics is embedded in our social lives but we have shrunken that space by not having community dialogues even in the face of social crises such as the rapid breakdown of social values, the rampant rapes and incest; the substance abuse that has grown exponentially; the failure of the law to check violators and the fact that most offenders believe they can get away with crime. In healthy societies there exist galaxies of warm spaces - such as families, neighbourhoods, religious groups, cultural affiliations, hobby based or community based organizations seeking to work for a common good. These groups help us to figure out how we can get out of our self created mess since each layer of life is nestled in the other to form a coherent whole. If this web of human relationships is broken, we cannot expect politics to deliver us from our predicament. There is a lot of fixing to do as a society if we want to fix politics! It is an illusion to believe that politics will help fix all the societal ills that confront us. In fact we have to shrink politics and nurture the web of social relationships to churn out a political leadership that will address our basic insecurities.

cemented slab. If someone steps on the plank inadvertently it will break and cause injury to the person. A few years back the footpaths were paved with flat stones like tiles which is good but the tiles were not properly laid so they are peeling off one by one near the bridge. The water of the Lake is oily and dirty. It seems dirty kitchen water from the hotels nearby seep into the Lake. In fact there is an underground drain pipe with inspection pits made at certain intervals, on the western side of the Lake to let out the dirty water outside the Lake and one of the cemented slabs of the inspection pit is left in a broken condition for several years. If this is the manner in which the Lake is being taken care of by several Departments, can we call it "scientific management"?

I would request the DFO to kindly inspect the Lake personally, to obtain first hand information about the present condition of the Lake.

Yours etc.,  
N. Hynniewta  
Shillong-1

Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.

# Ban Mania on Beef : Acche Din in a Ram-Rajya

By Ratan Bhattacharjee

Hindu hardliners once again turn cow-vigilantes. Earlier this week Pehlu Khan 55 had died in hospital two days after a group attacked his cattle truck on a road in Alwar in the desert state of Rajasthan. The Chief Minister Yogi Adinath is all out for cracking down on cow slaughter houses in Uttar Pradesh after the Modi government instituted limits on beef in a ban-mania in India which is one of the large exporter of beef internationally. In Gujarat, Chief Minister Vijay Rupani said that slaughtering cows and transporting beef will soon be punishable with life sentence and a Bill will be introduced shortly to bolster existing laws against cow slaughter.

After Demonetisation, this is the most debatable step the Modi government has taken in giving a jerk to the nation. This will undoubtedly have far reaching effects. Uncertainty has gripped the country once again. While wild horses which are national symbols in the US were allowed to be sold or euthanised for slaughter in the Trump budget, in India cow-lovers have got their heyday after the ban on cow-slaughter. Animal lovers in America justified saying that the money that will come after selling horses for slaughter will go towards care for other animals.

The Bill for ban on sale of cows for slaughter has got the President's approval. Beef had been a part of the Indian dietary tradition. In Charak's Sushruta Sanhita, beef soup is advised for tuberculosis. Beef ban comes in with the Hindutva politics in general and its dietary importance for poor Dalits, Adivasis and tribals is being underestimated although it is the cheapest and very rich source of protein. It is interesting that the Tamil Brahmins are mostly engaged in the beef exporting industry. Ban on cow slaughter will affect the economy and many people will be affected including those dealing with cow hide which is very important for the leather industry.

One supports that animals should be treated with respect and love. But then why only the cow and not other animals when it offends their religious beliefs? For example killing of pigs hurts the sentiments of the Muslims. But no ban is imposed on sale of pigs for slaughter. Our economic and biological cycle is mixed and dietary habits do not afford the animals not to be killed for human consumption. Banning it today is high handed political agenda. Or this ban should be applicable to buffaloes, goats and other animals

**In Assam, cow slaughter is banned on issue of 'fit for slaughter' certificate at designated places. In Bihar cow slaughter is banned. But slaughter of bulls and bullocks older than fifteen years is allowed. Killing a cow or storing, serving, eating beef are all banned in Chandigarh. Eating meat of buffalo, bullock, ox etc. is banned.**

In 21 out of 29 states cow slaughter is banned. There are no restrictions on cow slaughter in Kerala, West Bengal and in the North Eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. In Manipur, the Maharaja in 1939 decreed prosecution for cow slaughter, but beef is consumed widely. In Andhra Pradesh and Telangana slaughter of cows and calves is prohibited. Bulls and bullocks can be killed against 'fit for slaughter' certificates, issued if the animal can no longer be used for breeding, draught or agricultural operations. Violators face six months jail and/ or Rs. 1000 fine. In Assam, cow slaughter is banned on issue of 'fit for slaughter' certificate at designated places. In Bihar cow slaughter is banned. But slaughter of bulls and bullocks older than fifteen years is allowed. Killing a cow or storing, serving, eating beef are all banned in Chandigarh. Eating meat of buffalo, bullock, ox etc. is banned.

From Kerala to West Bengal to Puduchery three Chief Ministers came out strongly against the restrictions on the sale of cow for slaughter and they declared they are not ready to follow the diktat regarding cow slaughter. Beef -eating feasts were observed in IIT Madras and other places and the West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee went to the extent of calling the decision as 'unconstitutional.' Calf slaughter was banned in Maharashtra in 1975 and now it is extended to bulls and bullocks. This move was earlier initiated by Sena -BJP government nearly two decades ago. But in Mumbai itself nine lakh kg of beef is consumed daily!

too. Government has not spoken of any cheap alternatives to beef. Moreover it affects individual choices and a ban is unthinkable in a democratic country.

A few days earlier many intellectuals faced life threats as they supported beef eating. Hindus are 79% of the total population and all Hindus do not follow uniform rules and rites. Many Hindus do not even feel that beef eating is harmful or undesirable or anti -Hindu. Abuse of animals is detrimental to the environment but that is applicable to all the animals. Cow slaughter on that issue is not much convincing. Respecting sentiments is important in a pluralistic democracy. But this logic too cannot justify the ban on cow slaughter. Most Hindus honour cows as the embodiment of the principle of non-violence and idealise the animal as a selfless, nourishing mother. But attitudes towards beef consumption are not uniform across the country and some South Indian Hindus regularly eat beef. By justifying it on agro -economics no one can fully implement the hidden BJP agenda. There are no concrete assurances for rehabilitation of people affected by this programme. With the aggressive support of Shiv Sena and RSS, the government of a secular democratic republic is playing with fire and after the Babri Masjid demolition this is the most unthinking and undemocratic step taken in secular India only to remind us that we live in the 'acche din' of a 'Ram Rajya'.

The author is Associate Professor and Head of the Post Graduate Dept of English, Dum Dum Motijheel College, Kolkata. Contact: prof.ratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com

on the menace posed by the use of loud music in vehicles and further request them to do the needful and take corrective steps for protecting the general public.

Yours etc.,  
Aneeta Synrem  
Shillong-1

### Strict laws for better traffic management

Editor,

As a daily commuter in and around Don Bosco I would like to state that the new traffic arrangement introduced is one of the best to ease congestion. During peak hours traffic would definitely be affected as most families own more than one vehicle; remember that each student comes in a separate vehicle. The concerned authorities have no power to exercise their duties but succumb to certain pressures unlike other states where pool cars or school buses are utilized to ferry students to and from schools. Recently, I saw traffic police clamping some vehicles in Boyce Road. If the same exercise is followed near St. Margaret's School then commuters would be able to walk safely without squeezing themselves in between cars. Most drivers

do not adhere to traffic rules and as the number of vehicles increase every day there would be no solution to the traffic problem as the roads remain the same.

Yours etc.,  
Malika Dohling  
Shillong-3

### Rejoinder on Wards' Lake

Editor,

Apropos the rejoinder on Wards Lake by the Divisional Forest Officer, Social Forestry Division, East Khasi Hills, Shillong (ST April 25 2017), I have nothing to say about dead and rotten trees but even a fool or an illiterate person can differentiate between a dead and a living tree. My concern is on the healthy and living trees, as I had clearly mentioned earlier that these felled trees were very healthy and bearing new shoots and needles and also flowering and they were far away from the MLA hostel. I fail to understand the kind of technical/scientific practices and methodologies adopted in the State whereby healthy and living trees are rated as dead and rotten, just because of certain cracks and cavities on the trunks of these trees. If that is the

criteria then almost all the trees in Wards Lake, the Botanical Garden and the Reserved Forests have to be felled.

The DFO mentioned that five organisations are involved in management and maintenance of Wards Lake including the Forest Department. Wards Lake being a premier tourist spot of Shillong does not bear the expected mark or standard to be termed as a well maintained Lake. Putting together the sincere efforts of these five organisations, its condition is poor, be it in overgrown weeds, jungle clearance of unwanted leaves creepers etc., pruning of dead twigs and branches which is not done and the trees and bushes are not trained to keep them in good shape. Further, I would like to point to the poor maintenance of the Lake. A leaking water pipe running across the steps near the musical fountain is lying unrepaired since last year and a big rock is placed on the pipe to prevent it from sliding down the steps. This creates difficulties and inconveniences visitors using the steps as they are always wet and slippery. In another spot of the renovated upper Lake facing DC's Office a drain running across the footpath is covered with one inch thick wooden plank instead of a

*"A character is a completely fashioned will."*

--- Elbert Hubbard

## The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, SATURDAY, JUNE 3, 2017

### Is Meghalaya Police independent?

OF the many cases of corruption in Meghalaya one that stands out is the Education Department's misdemeanour of 2009 where the results of the recruitment test for lower primary school teachers in government schools were manipulated, allegedly, by no less than the minister herself. The then Director, Mass and Elementary Education, was asked to put white ink over the names of candidates who had qualified and to insert the names of those who failed to qualify but had approached their respective MLAs to pull strings on their behalf. In April 2010 the aggrieved candidates who did not qualify approached the Shillong Bench of the Gauhati High Court to conduct a probe into the irregularities in the selection process after they had got RTI replies and observed that the marks scored by qualified candidates were tampered with to facilitate appointment of unqualified candidates.

Accordingly the Court ordered a CBI enquiry. A 107 page CBI report was submitted to the Court in March 2012. The Court sent the report to the Government asking for Action Taken Report (ATR), but the Government appealed to the Court to set aside the CBI report. In August 2012 the Court ordered setting up of High Level Scrutiny Committee (HLSC) to ascertain the legality of candidates selected and those not selected and to segregate the candidates that used political clout to get their names included in the list of qualified teachers. In July 2013 the HLSC submitted its report to Government following which the unqualified teachers were dismissed in February 2014. Some who were affected by the action approached the Supreme Court in a special leave petition but the apex court returned the case to the Meghalaya High Court in March 2017 for its disposal. The HLSC has strongly recommended setting up of a separate professional recruitment board to conduct fool-proof recruitment tests henceforth. Meanwhile Police are taking their own time to investigate the criminal aspects of the case and to file charge sheets which could lead to the arrest of the guilty. When the HLSC report has clearly pointed to wrongdoing why is Police delaying the matter unless they are under political pressure. And this is not new to Meghalaya. It is now for the Court to take stringent action against Police for not carrying out its duty in the interests of justice.

# Housing for villages Titles & affordable key challenges

By Moin Qazi

Historians will tell you that an explosion of creativity occurs the moment the world starts complaining that there is nothing left to invent or that the search for solutions to complex problems has come to an end. This explosion is fate's way of reminding us that there is always something just over the horizon of knowledge. Social entrepreneurs are now using their talent to seek better answers to tough social problems at a time when the world has never needed them more. To make money is not necessarily their first objective. Their first objective is to make a contribution.

One of the most challenging problems of our times is homelessness. A report Housing Micro-finance in India: Benchmarking the Status by ACCESS-ASSIST in 2013 found that in India, the total housing shortage is 42.69 million units in rural areas. The same report detailed that out of the total number of people in India without adequate housing, over 90% of them live below the poverty line.

While we have been able to relentlessly fight poverty and continue to record improvements, homelessness remains a big challenge. The key constraint in providing shelter is that people do not have proof of being owners of the piece of land on which they live. This keeps them deprived of so many basic amenities. Once titled, they could obtain access to several government benefits. Even a small plot can lift a family out of extreme poverty. A decent habitat and shelter environment for the poorer sections can not only contribute towards their well being and real asset creation but also catalyse overall economic growth.

Priority for housing is higher than education and health. Sustainable and inclusive housing solutions, indeed, could bolster large economic growth quickly and efficiently. Rural housing space - particularly the lower tier in the economic pyramid - has remained largely unaddressed as many had tried and most found it a hard ground. The most elusive issue in housing finance is that of legal title.

While many villagers own their homes, which they likely built themselves, they rarely own the piece of land which holds their dwelling. This is a major obstacle as many families may not have had documentation for generations and the process of obtaining and putting it in place is an impossible mission to accomplish without nimble titling, mortgaging and financing system.

Both the government and all major financial institutions have launched intensive programmes for providing financial access to the underserved segments of society. These include savings, insurance and remittance facilities and loans for livelihood and consumption purposes. A major deficiency in these initiatives is that most of them have ignored a very crucial need of the base of the pyramid segment. This segment lacks access to housing finance and, until the issues relating to properly documented title are not sorted, access to housing credit will remain a mirage.

Village panchayats can play a critical role in untying the knots. In 1993 the Panchayat Raj Act and an amendment to the country's Constitution endowed the local village panchayats with functions of local governance. Typically, in rural India, villagers are granted land from government or live on land passed down from their ancestors. These are known as 'para-legal titles' (bill of sale, receipts for payments of taxes, etc.) that fall short of full legal title. Similarly many may not have a full land title but possess a documentary right to ownership, such as tax receipts and a legal protection from eviction. These para-legal rights often provide good security, ensuring permanence on the property and the ability to sell it to another household.

Mortgages typically require that households hold full legal title to their property. However, in many countries, most low/moderate-income households have para-legal rights to their

property. Local level initiatives for rural housing would also be able to develop mechanisms for addressing impediments (such as problems with titles) by building capacities to develop a title record system.

In as far as rural land rights are concerned, the local panchayat can fix some 'permanent ownership tax' and regularise titles. This will open for the occupants the gates for so many benefits from State-owned social programmes. Accordingly, State governments should use out of the box approach to break down the thickets of red tapism. What are actually required are revolutionary and cutting edge reforms that curtail the dense jungle of paperwork and docum-entation.

Apart from the huge outlay of outright grants for individual houses in villages, the flagship rural housing programme, Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (Gramin) or PMAY-G, provides some relief. The unit cost for these houses has been significantly increased and now through convergence a minimum support of nearly ₹1.5 lakh to ₹1.6 lakh to a household is available. There is also a provision of Bank loan up to ₹70,000, if the beneficiary so desires.

The programme provides for skilling 5 lakh rural masons by 2019 and allows over 200 different housing designs across the country based on a detailed study of housing typologies, environmental hazards and the households' requirements. Large-scale use of local materials is envisaged along with a complete home with cooking space, electricity provision, LPG, toilet and bathing area, drinking water, etc through convergence. The National Housing Bank should leverage microfinance for reaching the remote areas. Eight of the new small finance banks have been originally microfinance institutions and are familiar with this segment. The main hindrance is the high cost of credit from these institutions. Since these have just forayed into deposit taking, it will take time for them to build a low cost capital base so that they can provide affordable

credit. Similarly, it should design more innovative and rural friendly mortgage systems that address the typical problems of land ownership in villages.

The leading nonprofit, Landessa which is doing pioneering work in this field could be involved in training local NGOs to aid in this task. It partners with progressive governments and civil society to develop pro-poor and gender-sensitive laws, policies, and programmes that strengthen land rights for the poorest people. Their land rights experts work with government officials, local leaders, and rural residents developing scalable, practical, and innovative solutions to pressing problems like land rights issues.

It has a three-pronged approach: It conducts research on land tenure's effects. Greater data and information make it easier for working transitions to secure property rights; it provides legal consultation and support for government officials willing to make improvements in legally vulnerable communities. Thus far, over 9,00,000 Indian families have benefitted from Landessa's legal work; it educates communities on the various aspects of land rights, since legal systems often seem inaccessible to people who cannot read or cannot read well.

A lot of good programmes got their start when one individual looked at a familiar landscape in a fresh way. These creative and passionate individuals saw possibilities where others saw only hopelessness, and imagined a way forward when others saw none. What they did was not something too revolutionary to supplant the whole system. They simply changed the fundamental approach to solving problems, and the outcomes have been truly revolutionary.

One inspiring step has a tendency to raise the sense of possibility in others. We increasingly have the tools; but we need to summon the will the way game changers in the other fields are doing.-INFA

## POLITICAL DELICACIES

By Rahil Nora Chopra

### REPORT SHOWS SHARP INCREASE IN PROSECUTION OF TAX VIOLATORS

Criminal prosecution by the Income Tax Department saw a sharp increase of more than 100 percent during the three years of the Modi Government, according to a report submitted to the Prime Minister's Office by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT). At a review meeting chaired by Modi, CBDT told the Prime Minister that about 2,500 people had been prosecuted during 2014 and April 2017 as against 1,133 during 2011-12 to 2013-14 before the new government assumed office. Similarly, offences compounded by the income tax department in the past three years saw an increase of 168 percent, taking the total number of cases to 3,128 compared to 1,163 in the previous period. There was also an increase in the conviction rate, with 79 persons having been brought to book, 21 percent higher than the previous period. The Income Tax department carried out over 1,100 searches and surveys immediately after demonetization and detected undisclosed income of over Rs 5,400 crore, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had told Rajya Sabha in April. The department identified 18 lakh people whose tax profiles were not in accordance with the cash deposits made by them during the

The party think tank is said to be in favour of advancing the poll so that the Congress party, beset with infighting, does not get enough time to sort out its problems. Congress has been out of power in Gujarat for the past 22 years and is struggling to regain a foothold. Infighting in Gujarat Congress came to the fore in September last year when party national spokesperson and state legislator Shaktisinh Gohil sought to disassociate himself from the responsibilities of the forthcoming election campaign while senior leader Shankersinh Vaghela is putting pressure on Congress President Sonia Gandhi to declare himself as the CM candidate ahead of the elections. Ashok Gehlot, who is in charge of the state party unit, recently brought together Vaghela and state party president Bharatsinh Solanki at a press conference to critically appraise the three years of Narendra Modi government at the Centre as a show of unity.

### ADITYANATH UNDER PRESSURE TO CONTROL LAW AND ORDER

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has a big task at hand to bring the law and order situation under control. For the past one month, atrocities against Dalits and Muslims have increased. First it was the Anti Romeo Squad, which was

**The infighting within the state unit and the manner in which Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje is handling the affairs of the state are believed to be under review by the party leadership. One option under consideration is to appoint dissident leader Om Prakash Mathur as chief minister and shift Vasundhara Raje to the Centre as a minister in the Modi Cabinet. But it may not be easy to remove her from the chief minister's post as she enjoys the backing of 100 plus MLAs.**

demonetization period. Also, more than 400 benami transactions have been identified and provisional attachment of properties done in more than 240 cases, amounting to a market value of more than Rs. 600 crore. To speed up action against benamidars and black money holders, the Income Tax department has set up 24 dedicated benami prohibition units.

### VASUNDHARA RAJE LIKELY TO BE SHIFTED TO CENTRAL CABINET

There is talk of a cabinet reshuffle taking place at the Centre and in Rajasthan after the presidential elections. The infighting within the state unit and the manner in which Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje is handling the affairs of the state are believed to be under review by the party leadership. One option under consideration is to appoint dissident leader Om Prakash Mathur as chief minister and shift Vasundhara Raje to the Centre as a minister in the Modi Cabinet. But it may not be easy to remove her from the chief minister's post as she enjoys the backing of 100 plus MLAs. According to sources, many party MPs and MLAs have complained to the central leadership that it would be difficult to win the 2019 Lok Sabha elections under the chief ministership of Raje. Om Prakash Mathur is believed to enjoy the backing of Modi and the RSS.

### BJP CONSIDERING EARLY ELECTION IN GUJARAT

The Gujarat government may throw a surprise by recommending dissolution of the Assembly and going for an early election before it becomes due in December.

frequently in the news for harassing boys and girls, and recently clashes between Dalit and Thakur communities have left three people dead and scores injured in Saharanpur. "Dalits are being crushed not only in Saharanpur but all over the country and the BJP-led Centre is responsible," alleged Rahul Gandhi, who was prevented from entering the town by the district administration. He squarely blamed the Union government for the rising communal tension. The Prime Minister and Home Minister Rajnath Singh are believed to have spoken to the UP Chief Minister on phone and instructed him to take strong action against those involved in the incidents and bring the law and order situation under control. The clashes have come as a challenge for Yogi Adityanath, especially in view of the BJP's pre-poll promise to improve law and order in the state.

### KERALA COW SLAUGHTER INCIDENT EMBARRASSED CONGRESS

Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi has strongly condemned the conduct of Kerala Youth Congress workers who slaughtered a cow as part of a protest against the central ban on trading of livestock for slaughter. "Such elements have no place in Congress," party spokesman Randeep Surjewala said. Both Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee have protested against the central move and declared that it was an attempt to encroach upon the power of the states and therefore will be challenged legally and constitutionally. (IPA)

### TO THE EDITOR

#### Making politics of the SC ruling on cow slaughter!

The draft Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Regulation of Livestock Markets) Rules, 2017, was notified on January 16, 2017, inviting objections and suggestions for all persons likely to be affected by it within 30 days. As many as 13 representations were received regarding the rules and they were duly examined and incorporated wherever found suitable and the rules were finally notified on May 23, 2017.

The Central Government has clarified that the prime focus of the rules related to cattle is to protect the animals from cruelty and not to regulate the existing trade in cattle for slaughter houses. The new rules also prohibit establishment of an animal market in a place which is situated within 25 km from any state border and within 50 km from any international border.

The basic purpose of the rules as per the Union Government is to ensure welfare of animals in the cattle market and ensure facilities for housing, feeding, feed storage area, water supply, water troughs, ramps, enclosures for sick animals, veterinary care and proper drainage etc. The specific provisions of the notification apply only to animals which are bought and sold in the notified livestock markets and animals that are seized as case properties and the rules

do not cover other areas.

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MOEFCC) has notified new rules under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act which bans sale of cattle for slaughter in open markets across the country. The MOEFCC has also clarified that the rules on Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Regulation of Livestock Market) are to ensure welfare of animals and protect animals from cruelty.

The Gazette notification, titled Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Regulation of Livestock Markets) Rules, 2017, by the Ministry of Environment says no one can bring cattle to animal markets unless he or she has furnished a written declaration that the cattle will not be sold for the purpose of slaughter. The notification does not mention a word about beef ban and it was issued after the Supreme Court asked the Centre to make rules on the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

In fact the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act was brought in by Congress in 1960. Now when the rules have been notified by the government the countrywide agitation is being sparked by the Congress party through their "dirty tricks department" to spread rumours about beef ban. The Congress party is trying to

communalize the issue and to create false and malicious propaganda in social media following the philosophy of their seven decade old policy of "divide & rule" as inherited from their British masters to defame the country across the world at the cost of destruction of unity and fraternity among the various communities/states of the country by mis-interpretation of the rules and misleading the general public.

The Rules notified by the Union Government are perfectly in consonance with the provisions of Articles 48 & 49 as enshrined in the Constitution of India. It would be prudent to stop the sinister hullabaloo generated and led by the pseudo-secular Congress party and trumpeted by the oppositions against a welfare endeavour by the Government considering the unity and integrity of the country.

Yours etc.,  
Samares Bandyopadhyay  
Advocate, Kolkata  
High Court

respect. More so when it's observed with rigorous austerity, renouncing the material indulgences and dedicating this to the Almighty who is "common" to all and one. True, through "austerity" one's mind, inner heart and soul can be cleansed and that finally raises one's spiritual level. Throughout the holy month those who fast should not at all be hurtful to anyone whether through speech or action. Also, the mind must not harbour anything that precipitates negativity.

But when this holy month is defiled by the gory incidents of blasts - the most ungodly act, how could we link it with holy Islam? Is it a prelude to a bigger mission that it started with the Manchester suicide explosion on May 22 that shattered the euphoria of the concert-goers leaving 23 people dead, 129 others grievously injured? This is followed by the May 26 episode when scary masked gunmen attacked a bus carrying Christians. The incident left 26 men dead, including many children in Egypt's Minya. After a brief lull of four days, on May 30, a car bomb hit an ice-cream shop in Baghdad killing 15 and wounding at least 30. Then immediately the next day a massive blast tore apart the diplomatic quarters in Kabul near the

German embassy, killing at least 90 people. Sources put the injured count at a whopping 460. Then followed another deadly carnage early Friday morning in the Philippines, when a gunman burst into a Manila hotel and later set himself on fire. That incident killed 34 people. Now how many more tragedies will happen until the end of Ramadan? Peoples are worryingly apprehensive.

A thoughtful friend of mine from Mumbai - Mr. M. Nazeer, in a sorrowful tone, laments - "These all are the heartless attacks on humanity which only sink the holy spirit of the true believers of Allah. We are not feeling safe on our own." I guess he is right. Of course, no one can disagree that the principle teaching of the Quran -- 'Love all and serve all' should be misinterpreted to harm humanity? One strongly feels that those who kill and those who get killed, are both created by the "One Almighty". Then why is there bad blood among themselves? The time is ripe for all to introspect with sagacity and human compassion. Merciless killing is never the way to the Almighty. .

Yours etc.,  
Salil Grewal  
Shillong - 2

### Holy month, unholy blasts

Editor,  
Ramadan is a holy month for Islam which we must all

# SLASHER MOMES OUT AND REVIEWED

## Baywatch: Film has very little of Priyanka, but it's fun

**Director: Seth Gordon**  
**Starring Dwayne Johnson, Zac Efron, Alexandra Daddario, Priyanka Chopra**



The vicious reviews in the foreign press are hard to digest. Really, what do you expect *Baywatch* to be? 'Gone With The Wind-Surf'?

No seriously, isn't self-mockery the only way a 40-year old franchise can survive with its head above the ocean water? *Baywatch* has a swanky sexy swing to its gait even now. You just need to get into the swing of things.

Do not, repeat DO NOT, get judgemental about its amplified level of asininity, or the hammy bimbo-meets-beefcake performances. Just go with the aqueous flow and you are bound to turn the tides of the tripe to your own advantage.

The characters are all beachside prototypes you know, heroic in a very cheesy way.

There is a rescue sequence in mid-ocean where a boat catches fire. One by one the lifeguards run into the water at high-speed, the slow-mo credo temporarily abandoned. The valour is strictly of the dimstore variety. And the dialogues that Mitch (Dwayne Johnson) mouths would put Chinese cookies to shame.

A lot of the phallic/flattulence/fornication gags have been wiped out by the Indian censor board. But you really can't remove the cheesiness out of *Baywatch*. It's like taking the cheese out of the burger.

The cheesiest of the lot 'and hence the most enjoyable character' is Matt Brody, an Olympian swimmer who has fallen on hard days but continues to be pompous and self-obsessed to the point of seeming a parody of Ayn Rand's Howard Roark in bulgy trousers with biceps to match. The sporting Zac Efron plays this character with lip-smacking relish. His over-the-top portrayal jells well with the mood of amped-up sea slickness that this film specialises in.

Efron even musters the temerity to look at the breasts of a female lifeguard he has just crushed over. When she points out his crass behaviour, he says it's a compliment.

Don't look for political correctness in *Baywatch*. The actors just ham for no better reason than to nail the *Baywatch* spirit to the nearest lamp post and watch the neighbourhood dog pee on it.

And now for our own Priyanka Chopra. Such a massive disappointment. Such a betrayal of trust, having told us over and over again that she plays the arch villain, it's more like the ouch villain. (IANS)

## Trump trying to ruin my life, says Kathy Griffin

Comedienne-actress Kathy Griffin says US President Donald Trump and his family are "personally trying to ruin my life forever", in the wake of a controversial photoshoot in which she held up a mask that resembled Trump's severed head.

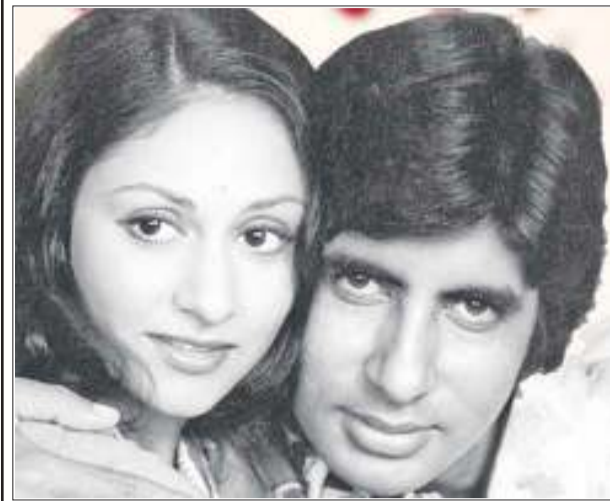
Trump and his family members slammed the image over Twitter, and Griffin said after that she has been subjected to a constant stream of death threats, reports a website.

Her attorney, Lisa Bloom, suggested that it was an attempt to silence the free speech rights of a comic who makes provocative and critical political humour.

"What's happening to me has never happened in this great country," Griffin said here on Friday, referring to Trump and his family members' tweets in response to the photoshoot.

"I don't think I will have a career after this. I am going to be honest, he broke me. He broke me. And then I felt, 'This isn't right. This is not right. And I apologise because that was the right thing to do and I meant it,'" she said. (IANS)

## Amitabh, Jaya complete 44 years of marital bliss



Amitabh Bachchan and his actress-politician wife Jaya Bachchan on Saturday completed over four decades of togetherness. The megastar has thanked all his fans and followers, whom he fondly calls his 'extended family' or 'Ef' for all the love and good wishes.

'June 3, 1973, 44 years of marriage... Thank you all for the wishes you send. Grateful and filled with love,' Amitabh tweeted.

The 74-year-old thespian went down memory lane and shared some details about his marriage.

'And as I set out from 'Mangal' a rented house of mine in JVPD scheme, 7th Road...in my newly acquired second hand Pontiac Sports, two door, with ma and babuji with me... My driver Nagesh,

now passed away, insisting on driving me to an apartment of Jaya's family friend at Malabar Hill,' Big B wrote on his blog.

He added: 'On June 3, 1973, a few drops of rain began to fall...Our neighbour ran out of their house and excitedly screamed to us... 'hurry to the wedding, it's raining, a good omen'. It's been 44 years since.'

On the acting front, Amitabh currently has two films in his kitty -- *Thugs Of Hindostan* and *102 Not Out*. Big B will be sharing screen space with superstar Aamir Khan for the very first time in *Thugs Of Hindostan*. It also features *Dangal* fame Fatima Sana Shaikh. In *102 Not Out*, he will be seen with veteran actor Rishi Kapoor after two decades on the silver screen. (IANS)

## Hanuman Da Damdaar: A modern retelling of Hanuman the great!

**Director: Ruchi Narain**  
**Starring Salman Khan, Raveena Tandon, Kunal Khemu, Javed Akhtar, Chunky Pandey, Saurabh Shukla, Makrand**

*Hanuman Da Damdaar* is a modern retelling of Hanuman's glory, which is far from Valmiki's narration in the Ramayana, or for that matter, any narrative found in the scriptures. This is the story of Hanuman's beginnings, of how he was transformed from Maruti to the revered Hanuman.

After a near-fatal accident, Anjani, Maruti's mother, ensures that he leads a protected life. She shelters him to the extent of making him a near nincompoop.

When his father, Senapati Kesari, returns from war and notices that his once brave son has now become a scared little boy, he is disappointed and upset. Realising this, Maruti feels bad for his father and himself. So, he prays to the gods to make him the bravest kid in the world.

The gods answer his prayer and lead him into a series of adventures, intro-

ducing him to new experiences and friends which ultimately help him to metamorphose. While the tale seems unassuming and non-convoluted, in reality the film, which begins with promise, soon dissipates all notions of being a good entertainer.

In fact, the plot meanders with playful frivolity. The dialogues are crass and cheesy, packed with distasteful humour, consisting of innuendoes and double entendres in contemporary lingo laced with pop-culture and Bollywood jargon, making the film obviously low on class and



quality. Sample some of these: 'Hey I'm half Lankan, half Indian. Tum kya samjhe, naughty, naughty,' or, 'Wah beta, apne aap ko smarty pants samajthe ho?' or, 'While I am shaking, your time starts now.'

This apart, there are a few meaningful lessons dispensed, though intermittently. These lessons are soon lost in the overall scheme of things.

The main attractions are the voices lent by A-listers of the Hindi film industry. But unfortunately, despite their well-modulated voices they can't lift the script from mediocrity.

Salman Khan as the older Hanuman sets the narrative rolling by being magnanimous and destroying his version of the Ramayana so that Valmiki's version could prevail. And being the megalomaniac that he is, his dialogues are loaded with self-

references, mainly to his popular dialogues and film titles. This gives the desired punch to propel the tale, but it simultaneously drops the reverence factor of the source material.

Keeping the momentum with Salman's tone of delivery is Arnab as Baby Hanuman. The tenor in his voice accentuates the child-like voice and innocent trait.

The others who aptly support them are: Javed Akhtar as Valmiki, Kunal Khemu as Indra, Raveena Tandon as Maruti's mother Anjani, and Saurabh Shukla as Maruti's dad Kesari. But it is Husain Dalal as Garuda and Sneha Khanwalkar as Maruti's loyal companion, the chameleon Seeti, who stand out among the crowd. On the technical front, keeping in mind the exposure today's kids have to world class animation, the 2D animation presented by Ruchi and her team definitely seems obsolete and drab. (IANS)

## Swift spotted with Joe Alwyn

Singer Taylor Swift, who is reportedly dating actor Joe Alwyn for a while now, was spotted with him for the first time next to her private jet, here.

In some photographs, Swift and Alwyn can be seen hugging each other and clicking photographs next to her private jet on Friday, reports a website. (IANS)

### SUDOKU

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### YESTERDAY'S SOLUTIONS

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UNDERWATER RASP  
 GO UR RXV D R  
 LOWER DUPLICATE  
 Y N A U R C G T  
 BULLDOZE TREAT  
 H N U S U Y  
 INDOORS SCALLOP  
 G E U L U A  
 HERETIC BESIDES  
 H O A A I S  
 A LOOF DELICACY  
 N A B D E R R D  
 DISBELIEF ABODE  
 E T D S U C U A  
 DASH THE LIKE SOF

### HEALTH CAPSULES®

by Bron Smith  
 WHAT IS THE MAIN CAUSE OF AN IMBALANCE IN GUT FLORA?

I STOPPED EATING SUGAR, AND MY BELLY SHRANK.

THE PRINCIPAL CAUSE OF OVERGROWTH OF CANDIDA ALBICANS AND OTHER POTENTIALLY HARMFUL GUT BACTERIA IS SUGAR. GUT MICROBES FEED AND MULTIPLY IN THE PRESENCE OF SUGAR IN THE DIGESTIVE TRACT. THE ULTIMATE RESULT OF OVERGROWTH OF BAD GUT BACTERIA IS BELLY FAT.

Health Capsules is not intended to be a diagnostic nature.

### GRAFFITI®

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**Pondering when to begin rarely gets it begun**

FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY—IT WILL BE BEST TO HAND OVER YOUR GUN—AND RETURN WITH US TO THE HOSPITAL, EH?

HOW SAD THAT YOU COULD GET NO FURTHER—WHEN DR. CAT WAS KIND ENOUGH TO GIVE YOU COMPLETE FREEDOM OF THE JUNGLE!

1148

**James Bond**  
 DRAWING BY HORAK

I'M GOING TO COLOR THIS ONE PINK...

THEN I'LL COLOR THIS ONE GREEN, AND THIS ONE BROWN, AND THIS ONE BLUE, AND...

IT'S MY COLORING BOOK, AND I'LL COLOR THE BUNNIES ANY WAY I WANT!

ARF! ARF! ARF!

SEE? I CAN SPEAK "DOG"!

YOU JUST SAID "MY ELBOW IS A POTATO"

### CLUES

- Across**
- 1 Series of degrees (5)
  - 8 Be inclined towards (4,4)
  - 9 Strange (5)
  - 10 To desert (3,3,2)
  - 11 Pursuit (5)
  - 12 Section of relay race (3)
  - 16 A domed roof or ceiling (6)
  - 17 Fit for crop cultivation (7)
  - 18 Immerse (3)
  - 23 Postpone (5)
  - 24 For the whole time (3,5)
  - 25 Absurd proceedings (5)
  - 26 If justice were done (2,6)
  - 27 Impressively large (5)
- Down**
- 2 Involved (6,2)
  - 3 A gamble with little hope (4,4)
  - 4 Study carefully (6)
  - 5 To baffle (5)
  - 6 Merriment (5)
  - 7 Money resources (5)
  - 10 Boy (3)
  - 13 Interval (3)
  - 14 Be cautious (4,4)
  - 15 Sharply defined (5-3)
  - 19 Set alight (6)
  - 20 Possibly (5)
  - 21 Magnificence (5)
  - 22 Captain of the *Bounty* (5)

**KidSpot**

Check it out! It's the new...  
 Grace will sit at my right...  
 I'll sit at the heart of the...  
 © 2017 KidSpot & Universal Uclick for UFS

*"A child is a beam of sunlight from the Infinite and Eternal, with possibilities of virtue and vice- but as yet unstained."*

--- Thurgood Marshall

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 293

SHILLONG, MONDAY, JUNE 5, 2017

### US pulls out of Climate Pact

PRESIDENT Donald Trump has taken the US out of the Paris Climate Pact of 2015. The past US commitment has been cast to the winds. More than 190 countries had agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emission and restrict the rise in global average temperature to below 2 degree c. above pre-industrial levels. The Obama administration had shown exemplary compliance. Trump is going back on it presumably in his mission to protect American jobs. The US president is short-sighted and does not care if the US uses its global leadership. He says the Paris accord is discriminatory. He has put India at a disadvantage. He has alleged that the accord allows India to double its coal production by 2020 and camouflage mitigation efforts with billions of dollars in aid. The charge is baseless wit falling prices of renewables like solar power, India is losing interest in coal plants. India is also committed to achieve 40% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel resources by 2020.

According to the 2013 data, per capital CO2 emission in the US was 16.4 metric tonnes. India's figure was only 1.6 metric tonnes. The US is the world's biggest polluter next to poverty. The mitigation equivalence is inapplicable as the industrial base line has never been the same. Current per capital emissions also show wide disparities. Climate change has its worst victims in poor countries. From Rio to Cancun, the US has been the stumbling block to a consensus. What John Kerry did has now been undone. Trump is handing over leadership to China!

### LOOKING BACK

April 14, 1989

### US Sub-Committee hails Punjab package

In a rare gesture of unanimity, a sub-committee of the US house of Representative last night hailed Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's "Punjab Package" as a measure designed to rejuvenate the political process and alleviate some of the human rights concerns in the sensitive border state. In its report on US foreign assistance and a relevant on South Asia approved, it hoped that the release of the Jodhpur detainees, the promise of local elections the revision of certain preventive

detention laws and new steps to bring to book those responsible for the 1984 anti-Sikh riots would accelerate the healing process between the Hindus and the Sikhs

The sub-committee headed by democratic Congressman Stephen J Solarz noted with concern that "India continues to be plagued by terrorist and secessionist elements whose resort to violence has resulted in the deaths of thousands of people most of them innocent civilians in the past few years.

# Reconnecting people to nature

By H H Mohrmen

The theme of this year's celebration for World Environment Day is, 'Connecting people to Nature' but in the context of Meghalaya or the Khasi Pnar people in particular, perhaps it would be appropriate if the theme is rephrased as 'Reconnecting people to Nature' or going back to our roots. The reason is because the Khasi-Pnar have always been people who have profound connection with the nature around them but of late this relationship is being affected as day by day people are moving further and further apart from the nature, they call mother.

Few months back I came across a story in the press about the Supreme Court of New Zealand order in connection with the character of one of the rivers in that country. The order was on the appeal made by the Maori the indigenous people of New Zealand who demanded that the court declare the river (which the Maoris consider as their ancestor) as having a personality of its own. The order declared that river Whanganui must be treated as a living entity and by this decision the river has been granted the same legal rights as a human being.

It would surprise us that rivers and personalities die. Well, it shouldn't because in the Khasi-Pnar tradition all the rivers were treated as having their own persona. The story about Umiam and Umiew, Lukha and Lunar, Kupli and Iale and other rivers too, have stories where they were given a persona of their own and in some cases they were even considered as mothers, grandmothers and grandfathers by certain clans or communities.

The Khasi-Pnar have a deep relationship with nature. This is obvious from everything they do in their day to day life. This relationship with nature manifests in everything they do from getting up in the morning by making use of the animal calls and birds' chirping, to reading the movement of the celestial bodies to decide on their agricultural activities.

The Khasi-Pnar ancestral wisdom of keeping time by reading their time from what is happening in nature is another example. They

know it is time to get up when the rooster crows and the crows sings. They know it is lunch time by simply looking at the position of the sun and listening to the sound of the insect which tells them it is time to pack their bags and tools and head home before it is dark. Even if they don't have a watch in their hand they were able to tell the time by reading and understanding the signs of time around them.

As far as seasons and calendar goes, although it is not systematic or scientific, yet they have their own calendar and plan their activities according to the calendar they created which is influenced by the changing of the season in the area. All their farming activities are based on the changing of the seasons. The different celebrations and festivals that people observe are also planned in accordance with the local calendar they maintained. In their farming scheme even the movement or the position of the moon influences the way they plant crops and trees. They will always take the position of the moon into consideration to decide the different farming activities they follow. Their calendar which has eight days in a week, 28 days in a month and thirteen months in a year is not only unique but it is also like a annual roadmap which dictates what they do and most importantly when.

Our ancestors may not have a systematic knowledge of plants and animals but they not only have different names for all the birds, the plants, the animals, fishes and the insects but they even connect their call or hum to execute their farming activities. So when the Cuckoo calls they say it's time to sow maize and an insect is even named 'pynih saiong' because the season it hums always coincides with the ripening of the fruit. They also know the seasons when animals mate, when the fish lay their eggs and also the different stages of plants lives. For instance recently, when I sought a farmer's help to plant a bamboo sapling, he

commented that this is the best time to plant bamboos because it the time of year when the bamboo is pregnant.

Recently a post in the Facebook of a friend asked if we have a name for cyclone, but the traditional wisdom of the Khasi-Pnar is very rich because we have different names for the kind of winds that blows in the hills. We have names for different winds like 'Erbatemon', 'Eriong', 'Erlangthari and u Kyllang. Our ancestral knowledge is immense because we not only have several names for the wind but we also have different names for rains, like 'Lapraw', 'Lapbah, Slaprymphu and u Pyliliang.

In recent times, Government has drawn flak from every quarter for the tree plantation programme that it organises every year to celebrate World Environment Day. The government was criticised because the survival rate of the trees planted as part of the celebration is very low and in some cases the survival is almost zero. The low success rate of tree plantation or re-afforestation that the government organised is because foreign species bought from Assam and other places were used in the plantation. Now the government through the Meghalaya Basin Development Agency (MBDA) is making use of the lessons learned and by using indigenous knowledge and locally available material has reinvented the entire process from nursery to plantation and management of the plantations.

The introduction of community nurseries where people are involved in the raising of nurseries and the idea of growing only local species endemic to the area (in the nurseries) will also help improve the survival rate of the saplings planted and the success of re-afforestation. Again, the idea of making community nurseries a business enterprise is also a commendable idea because it will not only make tree plantation during the World Environment Day a success; but it will also help the community earn some

revenue from the activity.

So the question is, what is the situation today. As a community, what kind of relationship do we now have with nature? In so many words we can say that we have lost touch with nature and no longer have the same kind of connection that our ancestors used to have with mother earth. Most of us or our kids are now confined to the four walls of their room; they don't have time to even step out of their rooms.

We are too busy with our lives and no longer have the opportunity to observe the mystery of nature around us. We do not have time to look at the moving clouds and learn about the weather; we no longer have the time to look at how the plants grow and how the animals live and grow from time to time. Since our kids are confined to their rooms they also learn from secondary information from books and the internet and miss the opportunity to learn directly from nature. Our kids are missing the opportunity to be close to the nature and learn by observing the changes that happen around.

The kind of competitive upbringing we provide to our kids is goal oriented and we make them believe that the objective of learning is only to get high grades and nothing else matters. We inculcate in the minds of the young ones that securing top grade is the only goal because second grade has no place. Now we also tend to believe that the only objective of learning is to get highest grades but the question is what do they really learn in the process.

Our kids and especially those who are in the towns and cities needs to go back and reconnect with nature! They need to learn the lessons provided by nature. Nature has so much to teach us and it is waiting for us to reach to its bosom and learn from its store house of knowledge. Connecting with nature also means understanding nature and the changes that happen around us.

# Think green, act clean!

By Barnes Mawrie

It is 5th June and the World Environment Day is here again. This is a day to reflect and see what is happening to our planet; what is the cause of its ailing and how can we come to its aid. The planet Earth is everyone of us, so it is a reflection on our own survival. It is so unfortunate that the US president, Donald Trump has refused to sign the agreement of the Paris Earth Summit, to cut down pollution and adopt clean energy production.

When all other nations of the world including India and China have joined hands in this noble endeavour, the US has played turncoat once again. It is a clear example of how selfishness and personal greed is dominating political decisions. It is a fact that this deplorable decision has been influenced by the self interest of rich entrepreneurs and corporate groups who care a hoot for the rest of the world provided their interests are

future of our state behave in such a manner, what a bleak future we have? Improvement will come not by any external force, but through a change of mentality and attitude. It is time that we begin to "think green", namely, to realize the importance of nature and the natural environment, therefore, to start planting trees rather than cut them down, to preserve our rivers and streams and not turn them into sewages. It is also time to "act clean" meaning to say, that we have to stop our littering habit because it damages the health of our planet, to learn to keep clean not merely our homes but our public spaces as well. The notion that public places are not my responsibility is a false notion that has to be overcome. We all need to convince ourselves that the whole planet is ours no matter where we live and so it is everyone's obligation to refrain from any act that can harm it and do something

**The manner people, young and old, litter the roads and public places with plastic wrappings and water bottles, is a sickening sight to say the least. It looks as if the more educated we are the more irresponsible we become. I have often observed youngsters shamelessly throwing empty water bottles on the road from moving cars. If our young people who are the future of our state behave in such a manner, what a bleak future we have? Improvement will come not by any external force, but through a change of mentality and attitude. It is time that we begin to "think green", namely, to realize the importance of nature and the natural environment, therefore, to start planting trees rather than cut them down, to preserve our rivers and streams and not turn them into sewages.**

furthered. However, it is a great consolation that 98% of the world's nations have realized the urgent need to change their destructive behaviour and start thinking green and acting clean. India for example, has vowed to increase production of clean energy to 40% by the next decade and China has already become the greatest manufacturer of solar and wind energy mechanisms. Mankind is reeling under the growing temperature due to global warming and we are witnessing erratic climatic conditions all over the globe. Cutting down emission of CO2 is one great step in checking the advance of global warming and if most countries in the world have agreed to do this, it is good news indeed for the planet.

Coming back home to our own state of Meghalaya, we still need to do a lot of work to resolve our own ecological problems. We are seeing a worsening condition of our own beloved city. People have lost all sense of hygiene and so they dump garbage on roadsides without any prick of conscience. It is no more an exaggeration to say that Shillong is turning into massive dumping ground. The manner people, young and old, litter the roads and public places with plastic wrappings and water bottles, is a sickening sight to say the least. It looks as if the more educated we are the more irresponsible we become. I have often observed youngsters shamelessly throwing empty water bottles on the road from moving cars. If our young people who are the

positive to enhance its beauty and health.

I hope that we in Meghalaya will adopt this slogan "Think Green, Act Clean" and gradually begin to change our thought patterns, our attitudes and consequently our behaviour. I am fully convinced that the only saving factor left for us is to implement this philosophy in our personal lives, in our families, in our schools and colleges and in our society at large. This year's WED theme is "connecting people to nature." This reminds us that the present deplorable state in which we are in, is the consequence of our estrangement from our natural environment. Human beings have behaved not like fellow creatures but like masters and lords over creation with the self assumed right to exploit and destroy nature. The more disconnected we are from nature, the more vicious and perverse we become. This is what Pope John Paul II has termed as "ecological sin" of man for which we need to repent and change.

Therefore, human beings like the prodigal children, need to return to mother Nature and re-establish that original covenant on which we were founded since the beginning of creation. Tribal communities of the past have a lot to teach us on this. I hope we have already learnt enough from our mistakes. Let us make our state an inspiration for the rest of India. Let us take Shillong back to her former glory as the "Scotland of the East." Let us all "Think Green and Act Clean."

### TO THE EDITOR

### Kudos for NEIGRIHMS

Editor,  
NEIGRIHMS must be complimented for opening on its ground floor a sale outlet of requisite medicines as per physicians prescriptions; what however, pleases me no end is the fact that on purchase of every medicine strip a respective discount of 20% is allowed from the said outlet and this has undoubtedly lent huge monetary relief to ailing patients in these days when cost of medical-care has escalated exponentially. I hope many, if not all private health care hospitals, nursing homes, medical shops etc. in Shillong would emulate such a noble patient-friendly example, given the fact that such agencies make gargantuan monetary profits as they order medicine and other health-service equipment at the wholesale rate and sell the same to common folks at the invariably printed prices embossed on such items.

I therefore hope that NEIGRIHMS will further explore similar enabling means to render relief to the denizens through such viable people-oriented medical services.

Yours etc,  
Jerome K. Diengdong  
Shillong-2

### Beef ban!

Editor,  
In his timely article, "Ban mania on beef : Acche din in a ram - rajya" (ST, June 2, 2017), Ratan Bhattacharjee has rightly said, "Beef ban comes in with the Hindutva politics in general and its dietary importance for poor Dalits, Adivasis and tribals is being underestimated although it is the cheapest and very rich source of protein." Indeed, the recent cattle - sale rules must be lifted in the greater interest of the poor. Cruelty to animals should be banned immediately but not slaughtering them for food. What needs to be done is to construct slaughterhouses where animals can be slaughtered in a less painful way and away from the glare of the public and other animals. It is time to protect animals because they are made on occasion objects of cruelty in the name of traditional sports like Jalikattu (bull taming) or dhro (bull fight).

Cruelty to animals whether it has been delivered in the form of traditional sports, callous practices or for fulfilling sadistic pleasures should, immediately, be banned whereas killing them for food or for saving human beings from their attack must not be prohibited. The former ban is necessary for the survival of humanity and the latter act

is a compulsion for the survival of human beings.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Kolkata

### Are missionary schools forgetting their mission?

Editor,  
I congratulate H Elias School, Nongthymmai for the recent SSLC and HSSLC results. The School is run by the Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB) congregation and was established by (Late) Fr. Usai SDB in 1972. Through this letter I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the school and its management for admitting not only brilliant students but also average and even below average students and also for its focus on uplifting students from rural areas and from poor family backgrounds. This resonates with the true essence of a Catholic Institution and the charisma of Don Bosco.

I believe every Catholic institution is established mainly to uplift the poor, the needy and the not so brilliant students. H Elias School is well known in Khasi Hills but it still maintains its objective to reach out to the less privileged. When you enter the school campus you will be awed by the friendly ambiance. At present the

school is under the prudent leadership of a soft spoken and kind hearted, Fr. Sabastian Palatty. The school practices a follow-up culture on every student and his background, which is a fundamental part of the school system and I was mesmerized by this practice.

I have witnessed the school transforming failures into winners nurturing students into confident young men and women and making them believe in themselves and have hope in the future. It is a challenge to train the students coming from diverse family backgrounds but I guarantee that it is always done with civility and in a friendly manner.

H Elias too could have chased for a reputation for that is the present trend, but it maintains its originality of helping the poor and the youth and that is, for me, the real preaching of the Gospel. Every Salesian institution is founded on the premise of helping the youth and most importantly the poor, which is at the heart of Don Bosco's endeavour. Hence I urge schools from St Peter's Nongstoin to St. Anthony's Shillong not to forget these basic principles on which the schools were founded and to refrain from laying down conditions that make it impossible for the poor and

less intelligent students to get admissions.

Yours etc....  
Mickey M. Marweñ  
Pyndengrei, Nongstoin

### The public deserves footpaths!

Editor,  
For the past few months we have only been reading about demonisation, rape, mudslinging between political rivals and the recent election results in Uttar Pradesh. Through your esteemed column, I would like to share a constructive criticism which I hope would be taken seriously by the concerned department. As a student, I want to give a suggestion regarding safety measures that need to be addressed along the stretch of road between Malki Point to Barik Point which is ignored by one and all. There is always a congestion along this stretch of road whether it be during academic sessions or holidays. We witnessed it during the recent Budget Session. It may be pointed out that there is a footpath on only one side of the road i.e. to the right hand side looking from Malki Point. Many pedestrians use the left side of the road also as per convenience. The office of Survey of India border is demarcated by a drain all along from Malki Point to

Barik Point. Very often we see Municipal workers cleaning it due to the litter thrown by the public or clearing the leaves from trees planted by the office of Survey of India. Motorists passing through that stretch have to be very cautious to avoid driving down a pedestrian. So my suggestion is for the concerned department to construct a foot path there to prevent any untoward incident and also to prevent the public from dumping garbage especially in the portion opposite Step By Step School which has become an eyesore for morning enthusiasts. As per the directive of the department concerned, all the hoardings displayed by various agencies were removed. I personally thought that this was done to make some new changes like enhancing the safety of the public, but to my disappointment, no changes have appeared ever since except that the infrastructure for displaying such hoardings still exists.

I request the Public Works Department (Roads) to consider the above suggestion so that the public can be benefitted for a change.

Yours etc.,  
Alexandria T  
Kharshiing,  
Shillong -1

"As the light begins to intensify, so does my misery, and I wonder how it is possible to hurt so much when nothing is wrong."

--- Tabitha Suzuma

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 294

SHILLONG, TUESDAY, JUNE 6, 2017

### Political leadership - a futile quest

ELECTIONS are eight months away yet the preparation for this game of thrones has begun in right earnest. Individuals who were in the BJP until yesterday shift their loyalties to the Congress the next day and have begun to sing praises of that Party. You wonder if this is for real or just a stupid game aimed at confounding voters. And the names that have begun to come up inspire no one because political leadership is no joke. Apart from integrity which people have long since given up expecting from politicians, technical skills to handle challenging assignments, fiscal matters, policies, plans, projects, ideas and innovative solutions to problems are integral characteristics that every politician must have. Since politicians play significant roles in the administrative processes, and also because they have to make public policies and laws in an era where knowledge is power, they should be well-educated and able to understand not just local politics but national and global politics as well because even policies in distant lands can impinge on the local economy. Do we have such leaders?

Meghalaya has consistently elected politicians with no leadership qualities. And if they had those qualities they abandoned them after joining politics. Someone termed Chief Minister, Mukul Sangma a dictator and a one-man army. If the other MLAs/Ministers in the Government today had some spine they would not have allowed the CM to hijack the entire government nor should they have supported him unquestioningly. It is evident that no one has dared question the CMs many decisions or engaged him in an intelligent debate about some of the hare-brained schemes that have been implemented with much fanfare. Meghalaya is the abode of music, yet the only state-of-the-art auditorium has been appropriated and turned into a venue for the state assembly because even after 16 years the state could not build an assembly building. The much touted performing arts auditorium has run into rough weather. The proposed medical colleges have failed to come up. So what exactly are the development claims of the MUA Government in the last 7 years? Isn't this a reflection of a leadership vacuum? Leadership is not just about waxing eloquent about grandiose schemes but about completing them within a definite time line. That is genuine political leadership! Everything else is political branding and unfortunately politicians are buying into a brand name - that of a political party. A political party in itself is meaningless if the people in it do not show any signs of statesmanship!

### LOOKING BACK

April 14, 1989

### Laitkor Durbar threatens stir

The combined Durbar of Laitkor and neighbouring villagers have strongly protested the Government decision to establish a Jail Complex at Laitkor. In a resolution passed during a joint meeting of the villages, the Durbar resolved that they would launch an agitational programme if the State Government continued to remain indifferent to representations against the proposal. Viewing with grave concern the apparent indifference of the Government, the Durbar resolved to allow the government time till March 20 to reply to their representations of the Joint Action Committee.

If this deadline is not met, the Joint Action Committee would initiate an agitational action.

**Bodo extremists ambush Kokrajhar DC, SP**

Bodo extremists ambushed the Kokrajhar District Commissioner and Superintendent of Police, attacked security force and torch bridges as the 1750th Assam bandh, called by ABSU, continued for theseventh day today. Inspector General

of Police Mr S K Deb told newsmen that Deputy Commissioner Mr Mukesh Chowla and Police Superintendent Mr Awati Aoesapad unharmed when the extremists attacked them near Saleskati last night. The police escorting them opened fire and later recovered from the place one bazooka, some bombs and arrows. This was the second attempt on the life of the two officers in the past one month. The extremists attacked the Nagarbali Police camp under Sidli police station last night. Police returned the fire. No casualty was reported. There was an encounter between a CRPF patrol and extremists at Kano Dang under Gossaigaon Police Station but no one was injured. The extremists also fired at the Additional Circle Inspector of Sidli while he was proceeding to Runikbata. Police returned the fire, he said. Mr Deb said the extremists also set on fire five thatched houses at Kashiram Nagar under udalguri police station in Darrang district last night. A wooden bridge at Majir Gaon was also set on fire but police extinguished it.

# Lack of statesmanship traits in regional leadership

By Aristotle Lyngdoh

question when a 'just retired' government servant contests election. I feel that proper investigation should be initiated as to how such persons are getting political support base in a particular constituency if not by misusing the departmental position and schemes in order to gain political mileage. Political parties who encourage such candidates are equally guilty and not free from such indulgence in malpractices and corruption. If the people want a free-governance, then they should consider these things and never entertain such candidates.

If more and more of these classes of leaders are coming forward to represent the people in the legislative process, then we are entering into the darkest hours of our political journey. Instead, people need to be brought out from poverty and BPL status through meaningful policies and programs. A state and society should strive to become self-reliant in all aspects in order to take care of its own citizens right from job creation to resource mobilization and this should be the goal of governance. This can only be achieved if political leadership assumes a new role which is noble and by putting the people and their wellbeing as a priority to the extent that if there is a better legislator he should be given a chance.

A voice for regional alliance has been echoed and seems to have gained some momentum. But the genuine alliance will be only fruitful if some sacrifice is made in order to seal the union. But the sad thing is that leaders of political parties are seeing this alliance as an opportunity for them to become Chief Minister or to hold some key portfolio and therefore they straight away jump to seat sharing and adjustment. If this is the approach, then there is no hope for any regional governance in the coming election. A concrete alliance cannot be achieved in a fortnight just because two leaders have decided to forge an alliance. In fact it should penetrate and be

internalized by people at the grass root level and by sensitizing each and every person on specific matters pertaining to the state's legislations and policies for the people, that can be achieved only through regional governance. By declaring that a Chief Minister should be from Shillong is ridiculous and illogical. After all who ever becomes Chief Minister will have to reside in Shillong. In the same manner the President or Prime Minister need not be from Delhi only.

On the other hand if the alliance is strictly for candidates or respective parties to win the seat as it appears and the leader of the largest group will be the Chief Minister, then another blunder is being committed by befooling the general public. At the end only few will benefit. The idea that HS Shylla has spearheaded - namely the movement for regional alliance is primarily for the interest of the people of the state as he has rightly cited an example about the "Three-flag Government" of 1978 that has brought in the Land Transfer Act. There was a great difference between the then regional alliance and the present conception for an alliance. Those were the days where the alliance was orchestrated by the indigenous leaders having a cause for the state and the people to fulfill the incomplete task of the statehood movement. Whereas any alliance conceptualized now seems to be more party-centric.

The problem with our political backwardness is because we have not been able to produce political leaders who can take the entire state forward including each and every citizen. What we have so far are only have knights and bishops who are trying to play the role of a king and queen in a game of chess. And therefore, nobody is interested in the issues affecting the general public and the future of the children of the state such as education, economic growth. All that has been promoted is a localized issues or agenda pertaining only to a certain section in the society like border dispute, MUDA encroachment and some other problems that any particular constituency is

facing. Perhaps because of this mentality and concept a candidate continues to get re-elected again and again from the same constituency even if he is visionless. Another undisputed fact is that every MLA wants to a Chief Minister one day or the other so that he or she can divert the entire development fund to his/her constituency.

Another hindrance to good and effective governance is the foolishness of political parties to harness and nurture the concept of "winnability". This is a hypocrite concept and practice that has deeply ruined the scope for good and effective governance. Yet another mistake that has been committed is the recognition ascribed to dropouts who are NGO's leaders by certain section of the society. What good do we expect from such political cadres, a lemon can never turn into an orange. They will definitely undermine the initiative of any good prospect of the movement. Our student organization is not able anymore to fight any issues in a noble and logical way through appropriate platform and forum. Every agitation and protest is preceded by violence like an arrogant ancient outlaw who enjoys traumatizing innocent people. We the Khasis believe that the blood of the innocent will not die in vain but groan before the maker. If we resort to these kinds of tactics, we endanger and invite unprecedented wrath to ourselves including our bloodline or family members. And by destroying assets whether private or government, we impoverish ourselves and minimize the opportunity for growth. What we need now is 'The second generation-hill state type of movement' led by intellectuals who are men of vision and of sound calibre because there is pending unfinished task of that hill state movement.

The purpose of this writing is to remove the dross that is associated with the political leadership so that it will pave the way for statesmanship type of leadership.

progress. Sri Aurobindo said, "Each religion has helped mankind. Paganism increased in man the light of beauty, the largeness and height of his life, his aim at a many sided perfection; Christianity gave him some vision of divine love and charity; Buddhism has shown him a noble way to be wiser, gentler, purer, Judaism and Islam how to be religiously faithful in action and zealously devoted to God; Hinduism has opened to him the largest and profoundest spiritual possibilities. The world would have been a better place if all these God - visions could embed themselves in each other; but intellectual dogma and cult egoism stand in the way."

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Kolkata

### Dress, culture and peer pressure

Editor  
Dress and dressing is an important socio-cultural practice cutting across the boundaries of nations in all the human inhabited continents. However, dresses are not just restricted to regional cultures and ethnicity in this millennium; but also to official requirements and big multinational corporate

culture, fashion statement, different styles, global, local and regional brand names, weather and season based need, economy and personal choice. Hence, a specific dress appropriate for one culture, country or society may or may not be acceptable or appreciated in another culture, country or a different society. However, advocating for global human rights, one should have the freedom to choose his/her clothes and dress of choice without any restriction; unless there is a specific reason for its acceptability, security or moral and/or cultural issues associated with it. Different ethnicities and societies have different views regarding appropriate dressing and that needs to be respected too and cannot be disregarded in terms of rights only. Furthermore, societies across the planet are now unjustly driven by peer pressure and gorgeous advertisements on various media outlets. Hence we often dress falling to that pressure to fit in better with our peers and this cannot be underestimated too.

Yours etc.,  
Saikat Kumar Basu  
Lethbridge AB  
Canada T1J 4B

# AAGC - Idea whose time has come

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

The Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) portends the advent of change in the power corridors of global politics. From a Cold War driven bipolar world divided in two camps the world has become a multi-polar today.

It has also resulted in the **Beating the Rhetoric** Africa while importance of Europe which is trying to reinvent itself and an emerging Asia. China and India have been pivotal to the discourse of a fast changing multi-polar world. In the midst of these events one emerging story is that of Africa. In the past few decades countries around Africa have begun to witness a new era of economic development. While traditional powers like South Africa and Nigeria continue to be flag bearers of the African story, new entrants like Botswana are beginning to make a mark. While Africa still battles with challenges posed by history, it is beginning to witness a shift.

The past decade, has however, also led to the development of regional partnerships. The Chinese led, One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative is the flag bearer of such a scheme. OBOR which will run through 60 nation promises to bring development to these countries spread across three continents while boosting global trade. While countries around the world have warmed to the concept, other powers like India have predictably chosen to watch the events unfold carefully.

And in the midst of all these it perhaps came as no surprise that on May 2017 during the African Development Bank (Afdb) meeting, an Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) document of economic agreement between India and Japan was discussed. Developed by three think tanks spread across India and Japan the AAGC in essence is a Indo-Japan partnership which seeks to develop quality infrastructure in Africa while complemented by digital connectivity.

The AAGC would consist of four major components development and cooperation projects, quality infrastructure and institutional connectivity, capacity and skill enhancement and people-to-people partnerships. These four components are complementary to promote growth and all round development in both the continents. The AAGC seeks to build on decades of goodwill earned by India in Africa to engage in newer partnerships and roles. Unlike other countries India has followed a model of development which is free from conditions in Africa which has earned it tremendous amount of goodwill across African nations. In 2015 India had extended a \$10 billion aimed at development projects over five years and offered \$600 million in grant assistance, including an India-Africa development fund of \$100 million. Indian engagement has focused on education, capacity building, skill and human resources development, and the Pan-African e-network supporting tele-education, tele-medicine, and e-commerce.

Japan on the other hand is beginning to explore African shores in order to reduce its market risks in the volatile Asian and European markets. Japan's Africa policy predominantly seeks to develop infrastructure. Japanese PM Abe Shinzo has committed \$30 billion investment by 2018 out of which \$10 billion would be earmarked for infrastructure alone. In 2013 the "Japan Revitalization Strategy" was

released. This document articulated the significance of creating new frontiers for growth by capturing the international infrastructure market. The document argued for tripling infrastructure sales by 2020.

The strategy looked at Africa while discussing strategic initiatives for obtaining overseas markets. The Keidanren (Japan Business Federation) had also identified African countries as priority regions in its "Toward Strategic Promotion of the Infrastructure Export" policy proposal. Seen in this backdrop it is only natural that India and Japan must come together with a development proposal that would seek to further propel the African story. The AAGC seeks to do the same.

Digital connectivity is also the prime edifice of the AAGC programme. It will help the growth of innovation and technology services in Africa which will capitalise on the knowledge conundrum of the Asian superpowers of India and Japan. Quality infrastructure connects people, towns, regions and countries, and helps unleash their potential for growth. It consists of five remarkable aspects. These aspects are: (a) effective mobilisation of financial resources; (b) their alignment with socio-economic development and development strategies of partner countries and regions; (c) application of high-quality standards in terms of compliance with international standards established to mitigate environmental and social impact; (d) provision of quality of infrastructure taking into account aspects of economic efficiency and durability, inclusiveness, safety and disaster-resilience, sustainability as well as convenience and amenities; and (e) contribution to the local society and economy. At the same time the growth model propelled by the AAGC model would be one that would be in harmony with the local environment, community and people's livelihood.

Commentators have chosen observed that AAGC is a response to the Chinese's OBOR by China's biggest Asian rivals India and China. Yet AAGC cannot be seen in terms of competition to OBOR. The scale of AAGC at this stage is much less compared to the announced scale and magnitude of OBOR. At the same time the fundamental difference lies between the philosophy of OBOR and AAGC. Much like the difference between China and India's approach to Africa the philosophy of Chinese lead OBOR and Indian partnered AAGC remains different.

China concentrates on infrastructure and cheque-book diplomacy, whereas India promotes a broader spectrum of cooperation projects and programmes focused on the development of Africa's human resources. China goes solo, while India is desirous of working with other willing nations to assist Africa as per the latter's priorities. As Indian authorities have often clarified Indian intentions in Africa are never prescriptive and rather it looks at the limitless opportunities of an India-Africa partnership.

AAGC provides a wonderful partnership opportunity between India and Japan in Africa. At the same time it would seek to espouse an alternate model to the OBOR initiative. The AAGC initiative may indeed emerge as an interesting model in times to come.

(Views expressed by the author are personal)

### TO THE EDITOR

### Make our highways safe

Editor,  
The density of small vehicles is growing every quarter and hence our state highways connecting various places including tourists points should be made safe and secure so that unforeseen accidents and deaths to innocent people do not occur. The road on National Highway 40 that connects all the way down to Dawki and onwards across our national border should be given top priority especially between Laitlyngkot area up to Pynursla. The ravines and draws of stoppage that point tourists are fraught with danger on this entire route. The SDO, PWD at Pynursla and Shillong should pay attention to this issue. As they say prevention is better than cure, hence unforeseen incidents should be best avoided. Perhaps the Mr Tynsong the MLA from the area is aware of this lacunae.

Yours etc.,  
Dominic S. Wankhar,  
Via email

### Religion and egoism

Editor,  
It is indeed very childish to debate and fight over the supremacy of one religion over another. A friend of

mine once jokingly told our Swiss friend who was about to return home, "Look at the sun of Kolkata; this is not the sun of Zurich!" Our Swiss friend enjoyed the joke. But in religion, such comparisons are not to be taken lightly! Unfortunately, this is the very issue which forces us to have our brothers' blood on our hands. As a matter of fact, this is the inherent problem of every religion. The reason has been beautifully explained by the Mother (spiritual collaborator of Sri Aurobindo). She said, "The first and principal article of these established and formal religions runs always, 'Mine is the supreme, the only truth, all others are in falsehood or inferior.' For without this fundamental dogma, established credal religions could not have existed. If you do not believe and proclaim that you alone possess the one or the highest truth, you will not be able to impress people and make them flock to you."

On religion, Sri Ramkrishna used to say, "Many opinions, many paths." This means that every religion has the same goal even though their paths are different. Indeed, every religion ~ in one way or the other ~ has contributed to our

"Never be bullied into silence. Never allow yourself to be made a victim. Accept no one's definition of your life; define yourself."

--- Harvey Fierstein

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 295 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7, 2017

### Reviewing rules on cattle trade

IT is encouraging that the Union Environment Minister, Harsh Vardhan has said that the Government is reviewing the new rules for regulating the cattle market because there are serious objections. It has been argued that withdrawal of the notification banning sale of cattle and buffaloes for slaughter in animal markets is necessary. Clarification has been made by the Centre that it has no intention to prohibit bovine slaughter which will adversely impact the multi-billion dollar meat and leather processing industries. The measure can also adversely affect dairy farming. The advocates of the ban argue that bovines can be procured straight from farms. The livestock markets only deal with animals meant for milch and agriculture purposes. In the western countries, a distinction is made between beef cattle farmers and dairy cattle farmers. In India, when buffaloes stop giving milk, they are sold for slaughter. The buyer is also a businessman and takes these buffaloes which are bought by them to livestock markets. The farmer's unproductive bovine is thus paid for and the cost of fodder and labour resources is saved. The proceeds from the transaction can be spent on milch cattle to augment income.

If such markets are abolished, the farmer will suffer. The ordinary dairy farmer cannot sell cattle directly to a slaughterhouse. Trade in unproductive bovines becomes profitable only if there is a market where sellers and buyers meet on a single platform. Closure of the markets will be counter-productive for the economy.

### LOOKING BACK

April 14, 1989

### Assembly secretariat constitutes body for redressing staff grievances

A high powered committee comprising officers and staff of the Meghalaya Assembly Secretariat has been formed to examine in depth all disputes, claims and counter-claims, complaints, grievances etc. and to suggest the fundamental rights of every aggrieved employee.

The committee was constituted at the suggestion of the Speaker, Mr P G Marbanian at 'Staff meet' chaired by him on Feb 21.

Mr Marbanian

India's longest bridge over Lohit River in Assam - Dhola-Sadiya Bridge, opened by the Prime Minister on 26th May is the latest in a series of Government efforts to strengthen ties among States through various modes of connectivities. Christened as Bhupen Hazarika Bridge after the great singer and composer by that name born in Sadiya, the event is a landmark in the era of Look North-East and Act East Policies.

The bridge is conceived as an attempt to bring the North-East to the centre stage vis-à-vis the mainland. It is expected to promote integration within the country and serve as a gateway to East and South-East Asia. It connects Assam with Arunachal Pradesh.

En route to the Eastern world, India's North-East has a special place in our foreign relations and trade combining political and economic interests. Prime Minister Modi has made a timely statement that: "North-East will play an important role in India's Act East Policy". The bridge is a major project in building infrastructure in the region envisioned to emerge as an important hub in India's engagement with South-East Asian countries.

It is one of the "connectivity" projects undertaken by the Government in line with the present motto of "Sabka Sath Sabka Vikas" to take all territories and the entire population along the road of development. By its launch after over 10 years of construction delay, the North-East Region has reached a new height in the race for "connectivities" to match China's ambitious Silk Road projects.

The land-locked North-East consists of Eight States (earlier seven) nick named "Seven Sisters" - Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura plus Sikkim. The States together cover 7.98 per cent of the total area of the country, but has only 3.91 per cent of the total population.

The Region has more proximity with other countries than with the rest of India as every State has an international border. This frontier region has just 37 km link with the rest of the country, but has about 5,500 km border with other nations.

A narrow and long

### Look N-E, Act East Policies

# Centered on connectivities

By S Saraswathi

corridor running to about 21 kms called Siliguri Neck or "Chicken's Neck" connects this region with the rest of the country and gives an appearance of being a separate region. It touches China in the north, Myanmar in the east, Bangladesh in the south-west, and Bhutan in the north-west. This very geographic situation is sufficient for its extraordinary strategic importance. It was officially recognised as a distinct region in 1971 when the North-Eastern Council was constituted as the agency for development of the eight States. The North-Eastern Finance Development Corporation was incorporated in 1995.

A new initiative was taken in 1996 when a high-level commission was established in the Planning Commission to assess the backlog in the development of basic minimum services in the region and find out the inadequacies in infrastructure development.

The Department of Development of North-Eastern Region was created in 2001 and was raised to the status of a Ministry in 2004. It marked the recognition of all-round importance of this region for internal progress and national security. The heightened awareness of the people of the region and their expressions of needs and aspirations were the driving forces behind the Ministry.

The North-East has been included in the special launch of the National Rural Health Mission and was a region of special concern for the Youth Commission constituted in 2006 to identify, encourage, and build up the capacities of youth population. The Commission made some exclusive recommendations for the youth of this region like promoting employment and employability and expanding technical and vocational education.

The North-East is endowed with rich natural resources like uranium, forest wealth, coal, hydro-power, oil and gas, and tea plantations. It has perennial water resource from Brahmaputra. Such advantages are offset by a number of natural and man-made problems not found

in such proportions in the rest of India.

Challenges of environmental degradation mainly due to deforestation for trade, rough terrain making development difficult but helping militant activities, drug trafficking by its situation, ethnic tensions arising from a curious mixture of tribal and non-tribal people of different racial origin, and social backwardness caused by gross underdevelopment have to be encountered if the region is to serve as the crucial link between India and East and South-East Asia.

The North-East is plagued by identity-inspired insurgencies and also democratic demands for separate ethnicity-based States within India.

Look East Policy was framed in the 1990s in the wake of economic liberalisation to promote trade relations with the ASEAN. Investment links and institutional linkages with regional organisations were established. India also became an important player in the emerging balance of power in Asia.

From the beginning Look East Policy had a component of development of the North-East in which linking the region with South-East Asia by various transport systems was undertaken. This policy has been followed by the Congress, the United Front and the BJP Governments at the Centre and has presently advanced to the next stage of Act East Policy in foreign affairs. This has brought into focus the North-East Region of the country - a region anthropologically complex, diverse by demography, economically vulnerable, and politically sensitive.

Government of India has implemented nearly 200 on-going road development projects and about 20 railway projects, and comprehensive telecom network under the Special Accelerated Road Development Programme for North-East (SARDP-NE). The National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation is set up for development and maintenance of national highways in the region.

The promise of "poribartan" (change) which brought about regime change in Assam in May 2016 has to be extended and

vigorously implemented in the entire region to improve internal and external relations.

India's North-East Policy has to react to political-economic changes in East Asian countries. Myanmar's return to international mainstream, for instance, has opened a new gate for India's North-East Policy. China's moves in the Indian Ocean Region and its initiatives with South and South-Asian countries have a bearing on India's Act East Policy.

The Master Plan on Asian Connectivity adopted at the 17th ASEAN Summit aims at building physical infrastructure to bring closer India and ASEAN States for economic development. India-Myanmar Friendship Road links part of the greater India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway. Mekong-India Corridor is an initiative to connect with CMLV (Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam) with Sittwe port in south-west Myanmar.

India is keen on implementing the BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal) Motor Vehicles Agreement which is part of SAARC Masterplan on regional connectivity. However, Bhutan is hesitating due to its overwhelming consideration for environmental purity likely to suffer under increased transport. Defence of North-East has to go along with economic development. India's naval rights in the Indian Ocean increasingly threatened by China are to be safeguarded.

Above all, special efforts are needed to integrate people of the North-East Region and rest of India. Incidents of ethnic animosities faced by students and workers from the region in other States of India will under the benefits of North-East Policy to India and transfer them to neighbouring countries. The policy of connectivities must first bind people of India emotionally with a national spirit as Indians first. --- INFA

(The writer is Former Director, ICSSR, New Delhi)

Nitish's ineptness on show in Bihar board results

## Populist gimmick can't lead to quality improvement

By Arun Srivastava

The nature and quality of education provided in a state define the character of that state and its educational institutions. All chief ministers claim credit for providing quality education and preparing batches of highly qualified youths. But Nitish Kumar, who has been ruling Bihar for the past eleven years, has been quite euphoric about his government's achievements in the educational sphere. He often boasts of raising the standard of education. But the fact remains that a deep cancerous malaise continues to afflict the state and Kumar has proved to be an utter failure.

Nothing could explain it

results. Various factors, including availability of teachers and infrastructure like laboratory, will be assessed." Astonishingly, the so-called CEO of Bihar did not have enough time to look into these aspects during his eleven years of rule notwithstanding his rhetoric of providing quality education. One statement of Nitish, nonetheless, underlines his inability and helplessness in checking the rot: "People have put in place such things inside the entire examination system that they manage to find ways to do something wrong".

In fact, governor Ram Nath Kovind had long ago

*Shockingly, Nitish blamed a "few Biharis" for ruining the state's image by fuelling such controversies. In 2016, the arrest of Arts topper Ruby Rai had taken the lid off the scam. Even the then BSEB chairman and several others top functionaries were arrested. In this backdrop, it is indeed intriguing how Ganesh Kumar could indulge in the forgery without the help of the officials.*

better than his snappish approach to the poor performance of the intermediate students at the recent board examinations, with only 30 per cent of the students getting through. Instead of pulling up the board officials for their failure to streamline and improve the performance, he patted them for the 'achievement'. While he defended the Bihar School Examination Board (BSEB) and the education department and ironically blamed Ganesh Kumar, who was declared Class XII (Arts) topper in the BSEB examination for committing forgery. He applauded the board officials for detecting the forgery committed by Ganesh, who has since been stripped of the honour.

Shockingly, Nitish blamed a "few Biharis" for ruining the state's image by fuelling such controversies. In 2016, the arrest of Arts topper Ruby Rai had taken the lid off the scam. Even the then BSEB chairman and several others top functionaries were arrested. In this backdrop, it is indeed intriguing how Ganesh Kumar could indulge in forgery without the help of the officials.

Nitish was ebullient of this achievement of his education officials, but did not speak a word on the plight of education in the state. On the contrary, he seemed to have been very happy with the poor show. He said: "Following the irregularities last year, the BSEB took stringent measures to ensure fair examination. For instance, the answer sheets were evaluated by experts. Besides, there is an informal internal mechanism in the BSEB under which the results of top 10 students in every stream are cross-checked, followed by physical verification of the candidates". However, this argument of Nitish has been openly challenged by students. They assert that no proper evaluation has been done. Many of them said they had been given fewer marks than they actually deserved.

Nitish has adopted the innovative idea of lowering the percentage of pass marks for improving the pass rate so that it shows higher quality of education in the state. Yes, one idea has dawned on him: "a comprehensive assessment will be done for those schools which have witnessed zero per cent

spoken about the sorry state of education in Bihar. Addressing an academic gathering, he cautioned that higher education in the state was on the verge of collapse. He even went to the extent of calling the officials concerned and the minister for higher education to impress upon them the need to put higher education to impress upon them the need to put higher education on the right track. Among the issues plaguing higher education in Bihar are the shortage of teachers and officials in colleges, which has adversely impacted educational activities, and the resultant migration of talented students to other states for better educational options.

In April 2013, the government announced an innovative policy called 'Mission Gunvatta' (MG) to improve learning outcomes amongst students attending elementary government schools. The programme had two components. The first focused on strengthening governance and school processes. The second component was an effort to strengthen the pedagogy by re-grouping children in standards three to five according to their learning levels rather than age, and provide them with remedial education for two hours. But the programme simply failed to work.

Evaluation is something more than the examination. It encompasses quantitative and qualitative description and value judgment, but in the examination neither of the two happens. It is the students who are a better source of information about the communication skills of a teacher than anyone else. Evaluation offers a way to determine whether an initiative has been worthwhile in terms of delivering what was expected.

Instruction and evaluation are integral elements of education. It is the duty of the teacher to find out whether the students have achieved their targets. Frequent examinations make students aware of the need to learn and update constantly. But unfortunately this is not happening. After Nitish became chief minister it was expected that he would initiate the process of improving the quality of education in the real sense, and not indulge in populist gimmick. But he has been a disappointment! (IPA Service)

### TO THE EDITOR

### Missionary schools still on track

Editor,

Appropos the letter by Mickey M. Marwein 'Are missionary schools forgetting their mission?' (ST June 5, 2017), first and foremost thanks for reminding the missionary schools to focus on their mission to the poor and the downtrodden people. However, let me strongly remind the readers that missionary schools are basically set up to educate the poor as the writer had stated and this practice continues till date. In fact reservation of seats for the poor is there, but with one condition that they should be hard working students and this was vindicated during the last HSSLC result (science stream) in which Lawanaibok Kharpuli a student from a poor family successfully topped the list in the state. According to the report, Kharpuli prefers books to internet and had not used a mobile phone till date (ST June 9, 2017). From this report we could say that

he is a hard working student and he knows the importance of education and the struggle of his poor parents to send him to school. Therefore I am surprised to read the letter that missionary schools are forgetting their mission by recruiting only rich students.

Further I am also shocked that the writer had mentioned only two schools (St. Peter's Pyndengrei and St Anthony's Shillong). Are there no other schools where students find it difficult to get admissions when their percentage is low? Can you mention which school in Meghalaya admits students with low percentage and rejects the good students? Naturally each school wants to keep its prestige but without neglecting the hard working students from poor families. I am also amazed to see students rushing to get admission in these particular schools; I don't know why! Perhaps they are good schools or the results are good. And the results are good because the school recruits

only good and hard working students. Therefore to say that the school allows only rich students is totally wrong. Let me also inform the writer that St Anthony's school also has an evening section that has been started for the poor and under privileged students who cannot afford to attend classes in the day time. The majority of students attending evening classes are not so clever and come from poor families, so they work during the day and attend classes in the evening. Likewise, there are many other missionary schools which continue to do acts of charity for society. Thus, to say that missionary schools are forgetting their mission is absolutely wrong and a prejudiced view.

Yours etc.,  
Aiborlang Nongsiej  
Mawkyrwat  
South West Khasi Hills

### Regional party alliance a selfish move!

Editor,  
The UDP-HSPDP pre-poll alliance better known as

pre-poll seat adjustment, declared on May 25 last is yet another attempt to mislead the people of Meghalaya that these two state parties are of one mind in the run up to the 2018 Assembly elections. This alliance is nothing short of a marriage of convenience between the sitting MLAs of these two parties, only, because there is no seat adjustments in constituencies where these parties currently have no MLAs. Then again, there will be contests against each other (called friendly matches by them) even in some constituencies where MLAs of these parties exist. These parties are silent and even ignored constituencies where they have sitting MDCs. Moreover, this pre-poll alliance (seat adjustment) excludes other state parties like KHNAM and the newly floated political party, the Public Democratic Front (PDF), which is very much a state party though it has not officially been given recognition by the Election Commission.

This two party coalition is therefore an exclusive club of those sitting MLAs and is aimed at ensuring party tickets to the sitting MLAs only and to bar MDCs or other prospective aspirants from contesting elections from these two parties. This is an extremely self-centered move by the sitting MLAs of these two parties. There may be other party members who are more capable, more popular and more acceptable to the electorate than the present sitting MLAs but they are barred by this exclusive club. This will be more harmful and damaging than achieving the objective. It will pave the way for rebellion from within these two parties. Moreover, traditional and committed voters of the respective parties will not vote for those candidates, other than those belonging to their own parties. They may prefer not to vote at all or vote for independents or other less traditional political enemies.

In fact, they have missed the bus by accepting the proposal put forth by H.S Shylla, whose proposal was for sincere complete poll alliance and pre-poll seat adjustments with all regional

parties (read state parties), which include KHNAM, PDF and others and not aimed at alliance only to suit certain individuals in the two parties. In fact, the people of Meghalaya who believe in regional parties were overjoyed to hear that they were going for a complete unification which would lead provide voters with an alternative to the Congress.

At the moment people here see the BJP as the alternative in the present scenario. But the Party is ill organised and has not taken roots yet in Meghalaya in most of the 60 constituencies. In most constituencies in Meghalaya the party has no units at all. It will take time for it to grow and to be widely accepted by all sections in Meghalaya, because the leadership here is not capable and some of them have dubious antecedents.

Yours etc.,  
Philip Marwein,  
Via email

Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.

*"A child becomes an adult when he realizes that he has a right not only to be right but also to be wrong."*

--- Lydia M. Child

## The Shillong Times

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### MeECL - Where does the buck stop?

IS there a system of accountability by which consumers can get their rights redressed without going through the rigmarole of a legal or quasi-legal process such as a consumer court? Citizens pay direct and indirect taxes for every product they purchase and this includes electricity which has become a scarce commodity in Meghalaya. In the city of Shillong citizens complain of frequent power outages, sometimes as many as a dozen times in a single day. Their electrical and electronic gadgets are at risk of going kaput but the Meghalaya Electric Corporation Limited (MeECL) headed by bureaucrats who do not have the faintest idea of generating profits on which to run the Corporation and to sustain it, don't care a hoot! This has gone on for decades and Government continues to pump in good money into an evidently failed project because it has not exercised its mind on how to re-energize this monolithic institution. Also politicians have vested interests in retaining the MeECL so they can push in their kin to be employed there despite the glut in the job market. After its corporatization, MeECL ought to have been run as a profit-making entity but apart from the change of name from a Board to a Corporation, it is run like any other Government Department without any system of accountability or performance evaluation which are critical factors in a profit-making corporate.

Today the MeECL does not have the capacity to provide intermittent power to the people of Meghalaya, so all talk of energy-driven entrepreneurship and software industries is bogus. There's a huge gap between the idealism of the Government and the ground realities. Also this Government has its share of favoured bureaucrats who manage to get quiet extensions away from the public eye and whose ability to deliver even while they were in active service is highly suspect. It has been stated times without number that the MeECL needs a complete make-over with a robust business model which the Government is ill equipped to come up with. It's high time the MeECL is divested and the private sector brought in, else, public money which could have gone into other more productive projects such as health and education is being sunk in to the MeECL, with much of that money leaking into private pockets of engineers and contractors. The nexus is deep and insidious. The power situation is far worse in the villages where people have no voice or political clout. Will the people of Meghalaya continue to tolerate this top-heavy, irresponsible loss-making Corporation which, while charging the public a hefty power tariff is unable to deliver energy efficiently? Time to hold the MeECL to account through a public hearing!

# The belt and road forum : India hits the nail

By Kanwal Sibal

India was right not to attend the Belt and Road Forum (BRF) in Beijing. China's acts of commission and omission actually made it impossible for India to attend. Any project involving several countries in Asia and even beyond, and presented as serving a collective interest, cannot be announced without any prior consultation. Diplomatic work has to be done in advance with concerned countries with the purpose and scope of such a project, and their views and priorities reflected in defining it. Only when broad support for the concept emerges through consultations should such an ambitious project with major geopolitical and geo-economic implications be considered ripe for announcement.

Actually the concept was announced unilaterally by President Xi Jinping as his initiative to which other countries were invited to join. The assumption was that for realising Xi Jinping's China dream others could be mobilised on the back of China's growing economic strength, its massive financial resources and the allures it can offer. If the Beijing Olympics signaled China's emergence on the global scene, the BRF formalised China's ambition to dominate the Eurasian landmass in transition towards an equal status with the United States. All the lines of connectivity across Eurasia have been drawn unilaterally by the Chinese on the map. India has not figured in these connectivity links, except the Kolkata port, but if Kolkata figures in these Chinese maps it is not because of any prior consultation with India. Even the label given to the project is purely Chinese and makes little sense. There are multiple belts, not just one, and how can there be a road on the sea? The absurdity of the designation only underlines the purely Chinese character of the project.

In India's case, China is guilty of serious acts of commission too. China announced the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), fully aware of its political implications for India. The CPEC runs through territory that is recognised by both Pakistan and China as "disputed" with India. China has a very clear position on developing infrastructure in "disputed" territories. It objects to any development projects in Arunachal Pradesh over which it continues to make untenable claims. Only a few days ago, on the occasion of Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurating the new bridge on the Brahmaputra River in Assam, the Chinese Foreign Office has asked India to exercise restraint in developing infrastructure in Arunachal Pradesh. It does not feel obliged to follow its own advice in the case of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK).

China is emphatic that it will not make any concessions on issues involving its sovereignty, but it expects India to ignore the violation of its sovereignty over the whole of Jammu & Kashmir that the

CPEC clearly constitutes. China's position that the CPEC does not involve sovereignty issues and that it is only an economic project is dishonest. If China sees the CPEC as a vital part of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and is willing to invest billions in the corridor, it is inconceivable that it will accept any transfer of sovereignty over this territory that would put all its investment in danger. If, as some Chinese commentators argue, China is semi-landlocked and that access to the sea through Pakistan and Myanmar provides it badly needed additional coast-lines for its western regions, then the CPEC is a strategic project for China not merely an economic one. If China wants to sidetrack the sovereignty issue by characterising them as left-overs of history that should not stand in the way of development, then it should apply the same logic to Arunachal Pradesh and not obstruct funding by international financial institutions of small development projects there, besides demanding a clarification from the Japanese that their involvement in developing infrastructure in our north-east will not include Arunachal Pradesh, which, regrettably, the Japanese gave in to.

In fact, for all the major projects that China wants to accomplish in Pakistan, whether dams, power plants, highways, ports and so on, even the upgraded Karakoram highway is of little use. All heavy equipment and material needed for these projects have to move by sea. China has succeeded in becoming the world's second largest economy and the biggest exporting country not because of land contiguity with its leading trade partners, whether the US, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, the ASEAN bloc or the European Union. It does not need land contiguity with Pakistan to invest there. If the CPEC excluded POK from its ambit and China had no presence on the ground there, we would still have concerns about other anti-India dimensions of the China-Pakistan relationship.

China has always used Pakistan as a proxy to contain India strategically; its decision to invest massively in Pakistan and incorporate it into its political, economic and military orbit is not an economic project but a geopolitical one, with Gwadar set to become a base for the operations of the Chinese navy in the Indian Ocean. China's expansion on the land mass of Eurasia is complemented by its expansion in the Indian Ocean area, squeezing India in the middle. Sri Lanka is playing a critical role in this regard, with the appearance of Chinese submarines in Sri Lankan ports presaging a challenge to our security interests in

the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.

We have for many months been signalling our serious reservations about the BRI as conceived. We view it as China's national initiative which other countries are not obliged to join, especially as it has been undertaken without consultation with India. China has been asked to show understanding of India's sensitivities on sovereignty issues just as it summons others to respect Chinese sensitivities. We have officially said that for us the key issue is whether connectivity is built through consultative processes or unilateral decisions, and have hinted that China sees connectivity as an exercise in hard-wiring to influence choices. In other words, its goal is to establish a China-centric system in Asia that marginalises major Asian powers such as India and Japan.

On the eve of the Beijing meeting India officially broadened its attack on the BRI by emphasising the importance of 'good governance, rule of law, openness, transparency and equality', as well as financial responsibility for multilateral connectivity initiatives, implying that China was not observing these 'international norms'. The MEA spokesperson pointed to the 'unsustainable debt burden' for countries that will host BRI projects (as in the case of Sri Lanka) and to their ecological and environmental consequences. Our opposition to the BRI now transcends the CPEC. While seeking India's endorsement for the BRI, an over-confident China, believing that the lure of Chinese investments will override any Indian reservations, has on other issues kept poisoning the atmosphere of ties with India. It repeatedly threatened India with serious consequences if the Dalai Lama visited Arunachal Pradesh. It came out openly, through its previous Special Representative for border negotiations that India had to cede the Tawang tract to China for it to consider a border settlement. It maintained its opposition to India's membership of the NSG and to the designation of Masood Azhar as a terrorist by the relevant UN committee. China's clear message to India has been that it will continue to oppose India strategically and that India, in recognition of the widening gap in the respective

national power of the two countries, should accept that it cannot stand in China's way and should adjust its policies accordingly. Hence the patronising statements that India will be isolated if it did not attend the BRF forum and that it will lose the opportunity to benefit from the humungous amounts that China intends to invest abroad as part of the BRI.

China's Consul General in Kolkata has belaboured this line most recently and hoped India would attend BRF II in 2019. China is seeking India's endorsement of the BRI for several reasons. If India

joins, it will mean that it accepts the inevitability of China's supremacy in Asia. China would have incorporated India into its grand design for Asia under its leadership. China probably realises that even if India cannot entirely prevent its neighbours from participating in the BRI, the implementation of the project will be accompanied by tensions and even a degree of confrontation. India is the only country that can stand up to China in Asia. All other countries are either too small or have profound economic links with China to do so. If India's resolve is broken, China will be able to operate without resistance.

China is working to undermine India's position from within by courting business, academic and media lobbies that question the wisdom of government's decision on boycotting BRF, think that the BRI is a reality that cannot be ignored and believe that India is losing an opportunity to build a beneficial investment relationship with China. Our open system allows the Chinese to do so, whereas we have no opportunity to provoke introspection within China about the wisdom of its antagonistic policies towards India. Believing that it will prevail, China is even playing patronising diplomatic games with us by suggesting, as its ambassador to India did recently, that it can designate the CPEC as the China-Pakistan-India corridor, which implied that China can trade with J&K through the CPEC and thus provide China double benefit. China speaks of linking the BRI with our own Act East projects, knowing that the sub-text of this would mean implicitly endorsing the CPEC as well as China's geopolitical and geo-economic ambitions in Asia and working with it as a junior partner.

The bottom line is that we can deal with China bilaterally on the economic front without having to join it in promoting its leadership ambitions in Asia at our expense. The prize of the India market-the world's fifth largest economy and set to become the third largest in due course-is much more important for China than that of the smaller countries straddling the BRI. If China can counter us strategically and believe that this should not deter expansion of economic ties, we have sent a similar message to China, namely, that we are open to engagement with China bilaterally to the extent it serves our national interest. Our priority has to be to accelerate the implementation of our own connectivity projects in the region, besides internal connectivity between our ports and the hinterland that will bolster not only our economic growth but also our export capacities.

(The writer is a former Foreign Secretary)

## Cattle Trade Control States slaughter centre

By Insaaf

Holy Cow! The Centre has made a mis-steak. Governments of Kerala, West Bengal, Karnataka, Puducherry and Tripura are all set to block it from looking for greener pastures, its Hindu vote bank. High Courts are in a tizzy and have given countervailing decisions. IIT Chennai students in Tamil Nadu are livid over attempts to change their food habits, beef or no beef. Indeed, the notification banning sale of cattle for slaughter through livestock markets and animal is a no-go. Chief Ministers Pinarayi Vijayan, Mamata Banerjee, K Siddaramiah, V Narayanswamy and Manik Sarkar have called it 'undemocratic', 'unconstitutional', 'violation of the spirit of federalism' as it's a State issue, 'anti-people', etc. And, they will not implement the order. Rightly so, for how does the Modi government propose to deal with the notification hitting hard the cattle farmers, those employed in dairy and leather business, among others? More job losses cannot be an agenda in furtherance of the Hindutva one. And, what about the North East, where beef is traditional food and simmering within the BJP allies have already begun? The backlash should force the Modi government to retract. Its argument that the regulation is to protect animals from cruelty is

with the peacock's tears." Justice MC Sharma also asked Raje Government to amend the Bovine Animal Act to raise punishment for cow slaughter to life sentence. His justification for the bizarre order of 139 pages was the Vedas, which "say those who kill cows should be massacred". This order dealt not with the Centre's notification but with an NGO's writ petition in 2010 over reported corruption in a State-run *Gaushala* where many cows had died. The judge quoted chapter and verse from Vedas and even research on healing powers of cows: it exhales oxygen, its urine destroys germs, stops ageing, its ghee prevents disease et al. Any logic for Centre to do away with the Bengal Tiger? Or rather, it should reflect on the calibre of the nation's judges?

### Delhi's AAP Intolerant

The intolerance bug has bitten the AAP in Delhi. The Assembly got a taste of its muscle power and that dissent has no place here. Its rebel leader and former minister Kapil Mishra, who has hit headlines with his charges of corruption against mentor and Chief Minister Kejriwal was gagged, manhandled by some party MLAs and ordered to be dragged out of the House by marshals, on Wednesday last. This after he wasn't allowed to speak and thus chose to

**The quarrel is now behind and it is time to act. The Special Task Force is gearing up. But while it is banking on its three-pronged strategy which involves law enforcement to control supply, preventive action at the district level and rehabilitation, the UN agency has a plan.**

utterly ridiculous. Sooner it makes amends, the better. Well, certainly before it has egg, rather in this case, cow dung on its face!

What it could or may do is to use the Kerala High Court's ruling to bail it out of this awkward situation, rather than worry about the Madras High Court stay order on its notification. A division bench on Wednesday last, observed there was no constitutional violation in the Centre's order. In fact, it felt its interference was uncalled for and dismissed as withdrawn a PIL challenging the order. Elaborating, it stated that the order did not impose any restriction on the sale of beef or slaughter of cattle and that the restrictions were on sale of cattle used for agriculture purpose at animal markets. No one was being prevented from buying or selling cattle outside the market. This was stark opposite to the Madras High Court's reading of the notification. Its Madurai bench had a day earlier, granted a four-week stay on a petition challenging it on grounds that the legislature hadn't categorised animal slaughter for purpose of food as an act of cruelty. Here, the bench noted the subject was under concurrent list and questioned how the Centre could arbitrarily take the decision before bringing it to the notice of the State government. While the two slug it out, more cases could add to the confusion.

### Rajasthan HC's Bizarre Logic

Rajasthan High Court should make the judiciary, Centre and State governments cringe. On his day of retirement, its judge suggested the cow be declared as country's national animal! Like the national bird, the peacock which according to the judge "is a life-long celibate. It doesn't indulge in sex with peahen. It gets impregnated

raise a banner demanding "a special Assembly be called at Ramlila Maidan to discuss corruption, havalas dealings, black money, foreign trips, and benefiting relatives by Kejriwal and Minister Satyendar Jain." Recall Ramlila Maidan was the launching pad for Kejriwal during Anna Hazare's anti-corruption movement in the Capital. Then and now is a sorry state of affairs within the party. With the CBI grilling Jain, time will tell how many will eventually have to hang their heads in shame.

### Punjab's Drugs Challenge

Is there hope for *Udta Punjab*? The Congress Government looks helpless yet is determined to rid the State of the drug menace. Obviously, the State machinery has failed miserably. Thus, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has decided to reach out to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to help develop a roadmap to root out drug abuse in the State, one of the promises in the manifesto. While the previous SAD-BJP government claimed the issue was blown out of proportion by the Opposition, the Union Social Welfare Ministry statistics show the numbers were over three times as much as the corresponding all-India figures (three million) for all types of drug dependents. The quarrel is now behind and it is time to act. The Special Task Force is gearing up. But while it is banking on its three-pronged strategy which involves law enforcement to control supply, preventive action at the district level and rehabilitation, the UN agency has a plan. It suggests engaging mothers as it had proved successful in other countries. Whether it will work in Punjab, is anybody's guess. —INFA

### TO THE EDITOR

#### Before it's too late

Editor,  
June 5, World Environment Day is not the only day to go for mass cleaning drives and other environmental activities to show our respect towards Mother Nature. It should be more about changing our mindsets towards the environment and to educate our young ones that our surroundings are as important to us as the food we eat and the air we breathe. As a young visionary and student who is concerned about the degradation and pollution of the environment, together with some friends of the same purpose, we

have tried our level best to take up issues of pollution in Shillong city, mass cleaning drives in market hubs to make people more aware about cleanliness and health. We have organised tree plantation, awareness programs and free campaigns in schools and villages in the outskirts of Meghalaya. It was a wonderful journey until we encountered the big business elites of cement industries who encroached into acres of forest land, polluting the nearby rivers. The setback was due to political intervention but this did not deter us from fighting and spreading awareness about conservation of nature in sustainable ways.

It is unfortunate that the

NGT had to interfere in our land which we should ourselves have conserved for our future and present generation. Our state machinery has failed to address environmental issues like the illegal stone mining in Balpakram National Park, the high acid content in Lukha river in East Jaintia, dumping of solid waste and sewage waste into Wah Umkhrah and Umshyri, rat hole mining, releasing of untreated polluted water to rivers by hotels and guest houses etc. There are many more environmental issues like the acid mine drainage in Simsang river, pollution in Myntdu river, the flash floods in West Khasi Hills and Garo Hills and pollution

of critical catchment areas in East Khasi Hills, our biodiversity hotspots, landslides etc, apart from the ongoing issue of uranium mining, that need to be addressed.

We may have received the environment awards among the small states category but people should be more aware at ground zero. We have had enough of lectures on sustainable development and promises to meet our basic necessities which were supposed to have been delivered after the very first election in 1972. But we still don't have electricity, potable water, employment, sustainable livelihoods etc., which are our fundamental rights. Will the

2018 election come up with a state policy for comprehensive development; of social and financial inclusion and of promoting a sustainable way of living?

We can only protect the environment if we change our attitudes. At the moment we are killing the earth by our destructive actions.

Yours etc.,  
Wallampukur Nongsej  
Viaemail

### Zika enters India

Editor,  
The World Health Organisation confirms the first three Zika virus cases in India - at Gujarat's Ahmedabad. We need to be

on red alert as Zika virus can cause epidemic in no time. It is also a matter of concern that other mosquito-borne diseases like malaria, dengue and chikungunya keep on taking many lives every year in our country. Let us not forget that Sri Lanka has become a malaria-free country despite its long history with the disease. Now, Sri Lanka has got the status of the second malaria-free country in the Southeast Asian region after Maldives. India should take lessons from these two countries to eliminate the menace of deadly vector-borne diseases.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Kolkata

*“A creation of importance can only be produced when its author isolates himself, it is a child of solitude.”*

--- Francis Maitland Balfour

## The Shillong Times

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SHILLONG, FRIDAY, JUNE 9, 2017

### CBI raid on NDTV

RECENTLY the CBI raided the residence and other properties of the promoters of NDTV, Prannoy Roy and Radhika Roy. It is seen as an attack on the media, more so since the BJP spokesperson, Sambit Patra was asked to leave the panel discussion on beef ban, where he made certain offensive statements. This has naturally caused sharp controversy. No one is above the law but law should be even-handed and not arbitrary. The Editor's Guild has expressed deep concern over the outrage especially because Prannoy Roy has been a very eminent TV personality. Entry of the police and other agencies into media offices is a matter of serious criticism. It is taken for granted that details of the case registered against the Roys will lead to disturbing questions about the way the CBI functions. The allegation is that the Roys, in cahoots with some officials of the ICICI bank were engaged in questionable financial deals a decade back. However, the complainant is just a shareholder of NDTV and the bank. Except the Roys, no one has been named in the CBI's first information report (FIR).

The CBI is a very powerful agency and should be above suspicion. But it is called a caged parrot meaning that it is in the thrall of the ruling party. Governments everywhere should be prepared to face criticism from the media, however trenchant. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that criticism from the media is the essence of democracy and can help correct the shortcomings of the government. If the media is gagged, it will mean that the government is not accountable to society. That will also dent the county's global image which the PM is doing his best to enhance. It follows that the CBI should not in any circumstances be driven by vendetta of any sort.

### LOOKING BACK

April 20, 1989

### Steps to improve SC,ST representation in central govt bodies

The Government has further liberalized the employment orders to improve the representation of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe communities in central government services.

In a statement in the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Home Mr P Chidambaram announced two decision be a ban on dereservation in all cases of direct recruitment in

group A,B,C and D vacancies, besides the present restriction that reservation in promotion would be applicable only to those grades or posts were the element of direct recruitment does not exceed 66-1/3 percent would be liberalized by revising the ceiling to 75 percent, thus bringing more grades and posts within the ambit of reservation orders.

dangerous to mislead the people through dissemination of information via the media.

A team of about seven doctors who conducted health surveys in 2001-2002 in the uranium deposit areas did not find any sicknesses related to uranium effects. Some journalists also went with the team of doctors. So far, there is no official and commercial uranium mining in the uranium mines of Nongbah Jynrin and Mawthabah areas, except exploratory collection of sample ores, by Atomic Mining Directorate (AMD) at Nongmynsong.

I therefore appeal to the public readers and viewers of the media not to be misled by the anti-uranium propaganda by self-styled uranium experts but to lend credence only to official proven findings by the uranium experts and nuclear physicists and scientists.

Yours etc.,  
Philip Marwein,  
Via email

### Wanted environment activists!

Editor,  
It is heartening to note

# Political stability not a gold standard for good governance

By Patricia Mukhim

The electorate of Meghalaya places great premium on stability. When the state suffered from the politics of musical chairs for several decades, people aspired for stability with the hope that the incumbent government will be given time to carry out its stated objectives. We have had stability for nearly seven years now. And what are the results? What were the deliverables at the beginning of the MUA-1 government? Does anyone know? Did we ask the Government to share with us the list of priority areas that need urgent redress? Did we ask Chief Minister, Mukul Sangma to share the roadmap that he has envisaged for Meghalaya under his watch? What are the visible signs of development today? Other than the Nongstoin-Tura highway the Shillong-Jorabat highway and the Shillong-Jowai bypass, are there any major projects that the Government can claim credit for? And by the way the above three projects are all central government projects where the state has very little or no role to play.

Isn't seven years long enough to show results? Of course it is and if you ask me, we have been very patient to wait so long for a miracle we thought would be wrought by a young and dynamic chief minister. Alas we are proved wrong yet again for Meghalaya is a very poor performing state on several indices.

Let me list some of the most problematic areas.

**Power:** The MeECL is in the ICU but no one will admit it until it completely collapses. The patience of a gullible public has almost run dry. It will not be long before the public gherao the office of the Corporation. East Jaintia Hills and part of Garo Hills are without power for weeks and no one lifts a finger or even sighs because people are so used to getting the worst out of the government and its institutions. Worse, people don't ask questions because they are conditioned to listen to lectures, when actually those who lecture us should be listening more and talking less. In the city of Shillong, power outage has become so outrageously frequent that it is impossible to carry out any activity that is linked to energy. In every locality power goes for at least a dozen times a day, thereby rendering all power-related activities infructuous ! Yet the

Chairman MeECL continues to adorn his chair as if all's well with the world around him!

MeECL is Corporation that reeks of incompetence and slackness. A Chairman of a power corporation needs to be technically, managerially and financially sound so that he knows exactly what is wrong with the Corporation and fixes it. Instead what we have is an IAS officer with no technical skills whatsoever, earning his income from a Corporation that is sinking every day. But why would he care? In the present system he is only answerable to the Government which appointed him and pays him. And he can give a litany of reasons why the Corporation is ailing and need constant injection of funds. The Government listens to him with a bleeding heart and pumps in more money. So here is a classic case of good money going down the drain year after year. And no one winches. Not the Chairman cum CEO; not the engineers who are very glib at misleading the generalist babus; not the staff whose only objective is to get paid at the end of the month. So all you have is a decrepit Corporation which is like Air India, is deep in debt and few takers should it be auctioned off.

Now coming to that grisly part about privatisation of the power sector, let's not forget that MeECL owns prime property around the Umiam Lake and in several parts of the state as well. In recent times it appears that MeECL has lost some of the property in litigation. It's time the people of this state seek RTI answers on the total assets of the MeECL; how much those are worth in current real estate prices; how much land the Corporation has lost by way of litigation, why and to whom. It would be interesting to find out who is benefitting from the loss of the MeECL. Also which are the parties/individuals acquiring real estate in and around the Umiam Lake which were earlier owned by the Corporation! Does the MeECL have all the documents of all the lands under its ownership? I ask these questions because we often forget that this state has produced tribal

elites with a vested interest in capturing prime property by riding roughshod over community rights; by violating even the sacredness over the 'commons' (collective ownership) such as water bodies, community forests, water sources and catchments. When we talk about tradition and safeguarding the rights of indigenous people, it is land which is the most critical of all resources. If land is lost we are fighting a losing battle. And if a sizeable chunk of our rural population is landless and we are still silent, then let's face it - we have already lost the battle. Everything else, the rigmarole of elections, the promise of a better future are in the realm of nostalgia. We are living in the real world; a cruel world where only those with political patronage make it to the top of the economic ladder. Everyone else falls between the cracks and is simply struggling to survive.

**Education:** Coming to education, Meghalaya should be ashamed of the poor learning outcomes. From the educational hub of the region it has slipped into a position that's lower than Arunachal Pradesh and slightly higher than some of the most backward states of the country. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of the National Achievement Survey conducted by UNICEF in 5 districts of the state, in 243 schools and 2927 students, Meghalaya fared the lowest from among the 8 North Eastern states. In Language, Meghalaya scored only 1.9 with Manipur scoring highest at 3.7. In Mathematics, Meghalaya again scored 1.9 with Nagaland scoring the highest at 3.4.

And the reasons are not far to seek. In Meghalaya only 11% of students join the Science stream as compared to 70% in Manipur. This is a problem that should be addressed urgently but is anyone worried? Not the Education Department; not the Education Minister. Its business as usual since no one is held accountable for the one lakh students who have dropped out in the last five years. And look at what MBOSE does! It continues to treat education as a commercial venture so it buys books from private publishers, replete with spelling and factual errors and which cost more and therefore means more burden for parents, instead of procuring books that are

more affordable from the NCERT. If this is not a problem for the Government then I wonder what is! Yet there is no discussion ever on education and no mention in the election manifestoes of political parties. This affects our youth, our future! No wonder there's a growing number of drug users. What else do they do?

**Roads:** None of the roads are built according to specifications. Repairs don't last beyond one season. Where is all the money then? Who has pocketed the money? Don't we have the right to know? Look at the width of the roads in the localities of Shillong. They are fit only for one vehicle. Is this how road making is supposed to be?

**Water:** The less said the better. The PHED must be overhauled and the corrupt shown the door. Hopefully a new government with no history will be able to do that! As of now we are all buying water from private vendors!

**Traffic:** A Government that has no vision to envisage a more scientific traffic movement within the capital city and has no guts to direct the schools to use school buses to ferry students, does not deserve another term. And if we are foolish enough to give power to the same set of people then let's not complain any more for after that is the deluge.

So we are preparing for the next elections with the hope that things will be better. How can that happen when the same people only change their uniforms and contest from different parties? Will their outlooks change? Will their corrupt nature change? No way! In fact many are in politics for pure business interests! Nothing yields such quick returns in so short a time than politics does. It's the best business! You only have to look at the wealth ranking of our politicians and their acquisitions to know you are being royally 'had.' So while the electorate has been sinking into the poverty pit the elected today are billionaires.

Meghalaya needs a new government that will have the courage of conviction to address corruption in the MeECL, the PHED, PWD, Health, Education et al!

# India to face tough times after U.S. withdrawal from Paris Agreement

By Yashwardhan Joshi

How will things play out for India after the US withdrawal from the Paris climate pact? Guided by its cultural heritage, India has maintained that it is committed to protecting the environment. And that commitment goes back not to 2015, when India signed the pact along with 193 other countries, but to 5,000 years ago to the age of the Vedas.

The path to cleaner environment for India and the rest of the world will, however, not be a smooth one now.

The US withdrawal means other countries would have to cut more greenhouse gases as per their pledges to make up for America's emission targets. America had offered to cut its emissions by 26-28 per cent from the 2005 levels by

the absence of American funds and technology transfer, since India's programmes are being self financed with its own technology, but by America abandoning its emissions targets and committing reopening some coal mines and slowing down reduction in coal power generation that is going to lead to more carbon dioxide in the earth's air.

So to keep the world on the same emission pathway of within 2 degrees Celsius, others have to fill in the gap by making additional emission reductions. This includes India as well. But for India and some major players such as the European Union and Brazil, it will be a daunting task as they already have far more ambitious targets and action

**The US pullout may mean scaling up these targets and more ambitious targets for the future, which would mean more investment. If this is a negative, the positive side of the pullout would mean fatter and wider sources of funding for India's solar and other renewable energy projects since investors generally look for a country with a solid green energy policy and commitment, and may shift their interests and capital from the US to India. With French President Emmanuel Macron arriving here at the end of the year to participate in a summit on solar power, India can play an important role in roping in more countries to promote solar energy.**

2025— a reduction of about 2 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. Its withdrawal could now add 0.3 degrees to global warming in a worst case scenario, according to United Nation predictions.

Another setback to developing countries would be in terms of loss of financial support of 3 billion dollars and transfer of technology the US had committed under the Paris deal to help them develop sustainable energy sources.

There is, however, a silver lining as several American States, cities and businesses have denounced the US government's decision and vowed to honour the Paris Agreement and keep working hard for a cleaner and more prosperous future for all. Among these include California, which has the sixth largest economy in the world. New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg has already offered 15 million dollars to the UN Secretariat that stands to lose from the US pulling out of the climate accord.

But every nation, including Germany and France, agrees that extra efforts will now be needed to fulfil the goal of keeping the global temperature rise to less than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by the turn of this century.

To meet that goal, India has promised to achieve three main quantifiable targets by 2030— reduce its emission intensity (emissions per unit of GDP) by 33-35 per cent from the 2005 levels, increase its forest cover to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent and generate at least 40 per cent of its total electricity from non-fossil fuel sources.

Now with the US out of the pact, these targets are likely to be affected not by

plans. To meet its targets, especially the one about generating at least 40 per cent of its total electricity from non-conventional sources by 2030, India is investing heavily in renewable energy. The investment is in solar power, wind power, biomass and hydro electricity in order to build 175 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2020. According to some estimates, the total investment envisaged is in the range of 175-180 billion dollars, of which about 60 billion dollars have already been made. This includes half a billion dollars in green Masala bonds launched successfully by coal-burning behemoth NTPC and IREDA, the government's funding arm for renewable projects.

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India had made a significant contribution to the Paris Accord on behalf of developing countries, extracting for them favourable terms. Now it has to play a more important role after the US pullout.

(Yashwardhan Joshi is a journalist of long standing and commentator on social issues and administration)

come from the people themselves, an environmentalism which seeks to protest against the short-sighted motives of some with adverse consequence on others and to prescribe less destructive technologies and lifestyles. Such environmentalism can be a social program which should steadily gain power, prestige and most importantly, public appeal.

Let us hope that each celebration of World Environment Day year after year would bring environmentalism to the fore and produce more environmentalists in the state who, in the long run can nurture a society that does not only look back at the past but which will ensure that the needs of the future are not endangered by the demand to meet the needs of the present.

Yours etc.,  
KL Tariang,  
Via email

**Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.**

*"A child becomes an adult when he realizes that he has a right not only to be right but also to be wrong."*

--- Lydia M. Child

## The Shillong Times

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### New moves in CPI(M)

A regimented party like CPI(M) has its own ways of working. The party's central committee is likely to turn down the politburo's majority opinion on general secretary Sitaram Yechuri's Rajya Sabha nomination. The issue will come up at the coming central committee meeting beginning on July 17. The controversy over the line came to the surface when secular parties wanted Jyoti Basu to be Prime Minister in 1996. It later manifested itself during breaking up the alliance with the Congress government on the Indo-US nuclear deal in 2004. The party's political tactical line of equidistance with the Congress and the BJP has been called in question. The situation has changed with the BJP sweep all over India. The case against Yechuri's nomination is clear. First, no CPI(M) general secretary had held a post in the Rajya Sabha before Yechuri who has already completed two terms in the Upper House. The party has to make an exception for him to give him the ticket for the third time. He has to bank on the support of forty four Congress MP's to get the minimum forty two first preference votes to make it to the upper house.

Bengal's CPI(M) brigade - Surya Kanta Mishra, Biman Bose and Md. Salim are for Sitaram Yechuri's nomination. The Bengal party is aware that it cannot survive in the state fighting a solo battle. It had an alliance with the Congress in the 2016 assembly elections. But the central leadership had declared that it was not in consonance with the party line. A historian like Irfan Habib supports the alliance to fight the BJP and so does former general secretary Prakash Karat. It has also been suggested that there can be tacit support to the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal to resist the BJP inroads into the state.

### LOOKING BACK

April 20, 1989

### Dandavate wants probe on file leakage

Janata Dal leader Prof Madhu Dandavate demanded in the Lok Sabha today that a parliamentary committee be set up to go into the reported passing on of a confidential Home Ministry file to the editor of Indian Express. Raising the matter during the zero hour, Prof Dandavate said

according to the editor's report in the paper the file was made available to him in February 1987.

Speaker Mr Balram Jakhar told Prof. Dandavate and his party colleague Mr Jaipal Reddy that he would write to the Home Minister in this regard. "After I get his reply, I shall come to the house."

# Corbyn emerges stronger after general elections Labour's Movement for a new Britain gets momentum

By Arun Srivastava

Mocked and derided from the beginning of his career as the leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn has transcended expectations. He has achieved the unexpected. The individual who began his campaign to be Labour leader as a 100-1 outsider, and was systematically despised and derided as unelectable, not only increased the number of Labour seats, a prospect seen by many as unthinkable when the election was called on 18 April, but even made the powerful prime minister, May to bite the dust.

Jeremy may not have achieved the unthinkable, to emerge as the possible claimant for the office of the prime minister, but he defied the expectations of opponents and pollsters with a Labour result that may not necessarily put him in Downing Street, but could deliver a hung parliament rather than the anticipated cull of his MPs. What was most important that he could achieve this feat in the face of bitter criticism not only from his opponents but from severe leg pulling by some of his own labour comrades.

The primary reason for his triumph is he understood that voters want to be inspired rather than lectured; the young Britons aspire to usher in a new political order. Even while the elections were approaching fast, his detractors tried to spread the impression around that Corbyn disposes what May proposes. But unfortunately for his adversaries their tactics failed; there were no takers for this snide. It was for his personal appeal that the Labour registered a ten per cent increase in its support while Tory suffered 5 per cent decline.

Performance of Corbyn also cautions the political establishment not to deride and lampoon the political opponents. We have been witnessing politicians practising this nature of politics. The leader of the ruling party, precisely the prime minister taking nasty jibes at the opponent and

questioning his political acumen and credibility. Corbyn's rebuff to May should serve as the right lesson to learn. They must not treat them as super humans, as Corbyn's detractors disparaged him. No one knows the mood of the people. A five per cent swing in people's mood jeopardized the future of the British prime minister.

With a hung Parliament, May and his close aides have already put their efforts to salvage the situation so that she continues to hold the office, obviously with the support from some other party, but coinciding with this move a significant number of Tory MPs have started a campaign for her removal. Their argument has been; she has failed to read the mind of the voters and motivate them to stand by her and vote for her. It is believed that the Tory MPs have already converged on the new leader, who will head the coalition government. By the early hours of Friday morning, pressure was mounting on the prime minister to quit. Tory MPs nurse "she ought to go"

Jeremy Corbyn who is attributed to have changed the face of the British politics and rewrite the political history of UK has called for May to resign after hung parliament is confirmed. He said people 'have had enough of austerity politics' as pressure mounts on prime minister. Politics isn't going back into the box where it was before. What's happened is people have said they've had quite enough of austerity politics." It is quite significant that May tasted the defeat just 11 days ahead of Brexit talks begin. True enough the general election result will be seen as a disaster in Brussels, where officials have been eager to get on with Brexit negotiations with a prime minister in command of her party.

This defeat has no doubt denied her the

authority to begin the Brexit talk. May had called the election to assert her authority. She wanted a mandate. The mandate she has got is lost Conservative seats, lost votes, lost support and lost confidence. The Corbyn jolt to May could be gauged from her own observation: "It is bad. It was a dreadful night. I've lost some excellent and remarkable friends. This is a very bad moment for the Conservative party and we need to take stock and our leader needs to take stock." The former chancellor George Osborne described it as a "catastrophic" result. May's defeat also owes to the huge societal divisions. Unfortunately the Tories preferred to ignore the emerging trend.

The failure of the prime minister's election gamble, taken at a stage when the party was more than 20 points ahead in the polls, triggered uncertainty on the eve of Brexit talks, causing a drop in the value of sterling and pound. Corbyn sustained a string of attacks from Conservatives as well as from the media; a number of newspapers called on their readers to reject him in Thursday's poll. They also accused Corbyn as being terrorist sympathizers.

This verdict reflects the peoples' endorsement of his capabilities to understand and comprehend the existing political and economic condition of the country as well his alternate model to meet the challenges. His manifesto was derided by his political opponents. But the verdict is the manifestation of peoples' approval of his programmes and policies. The young people have undoubtedly rallied behind him for his call to overhaul the education system and bring education at the doorstep of the people to empower them. The creation of job and throwing away the pretense of being the yes man of America has been widely appreciated.

Just a few weeks ago Theresa May set out on the

mission to grind Labour into dust with a snap election whose express purpose was to deliver a crushing majority. In fact three weeks ago, her party had 20-point lead. But the more Corbyn unpacked his policies the lead started to narrow. However the people sent the rejection slip to her. Whoever forms the next government will still arguably have a mandate for Brexit, thanks to the referendum. During referendum Corbyn had campaigned on a soft Brexit platform stressing continued access to the single market.

Behind the façade of wisdom an insinuation campaign has been launched against Corbyn for last two years, but when the said wisdom was put before the national electorate, the Labour party emerged victorious under Corbyn, he was electable. Those who held the wisdom were the scientists. To take Labour's prospects seriously under Corbyn was to abandon being taken seriously yourself. If May manages to get a majority, her leadership would still be weakened, as the Conservatives had been hoping for a clear cut lead in seats of up to 100. But the Britons denied her.

May toured many Labour-held target constituencies for winning over the pro-Brexit heartlands. But unfortunately her proposed shake-up of social care, which meant people would have to pay for care in their homes out of the value of their property, went down extremely badly with voters. Even her move to abandon the triple lock on pensions and withdraw winter fuel payments from the wealthy failed to get support. While Carbyn was accused of coming out with the anti-people and unpopular policies, but in the true sense it now transpires that Tory manifesto failed to catch the peoples' imagination as it was full of unpopular policies and lacked of incentives. (IPA Service)

## Comey's testimony builds case for Trump's prosecution US politics is heading towards its biggest turmoil

By Nitya Chakraborty

US President Donald Trump is facing his biggest political battle in less than five months of presidency after the testimony given by the fired FBI Director James B. Comey on June 8 that President Trump put pressure on him at one to one meeting to drop the investigations against his former national security adviser Michael T Flynn. He also said that Trump and White House spread lies against him and FBI. The unequivocal manner in which Comey mentioned of the US President's continuing insistence on him to let Flynn go meaning dropping the investigations for his Russian links, is a sort of obstruction to justice and this is a serious offence as per the American constitution calling for prosecution.

Earlier reports came that Flynn was under the investigation by the FBI for having been a paid foreign agent working for Turkey's President Recep Erdogan. This was apart from his close Russian connections which he himself later admitted and invited dismissal from President Trump. Now when the FBI investigations are on and these refer to the connections with the

is believing him. Even the Republicans, who are trying to find out way to salvage the situation, have believed the statement of the former FBI Director who is a known Republican Party sympathizer with values and strong ethics. They are not in a mood to give the ground to the Democrats at this time on the issue of prosecution or impeachment. The Republican Party is looking for other ways to defuse the situation, if possible.

A section of the Republicans who are anti-Trump, has mooted the proposal that if the special counsel Mueller carries out the investigations and Trump gets implicated further, the GOP leadership should consider whether the change of Presidency can be brought about through negotiations with Trump by promoting vice president Pence under 25th amendment of the US constitution. According to this, the US cabinet can take a decision under extraordinary circumstances to ask the President to step down and nominate vice president. Nobody among the Republican Party has discussed officially this with President Trump but

### US legal experts opine that what Trump has told Comey in the course of an ongoing investigations, is in the nature of a deliberate effort to impede the investigations and this is a sort of serious obstruction of justice.

foreign countries, President Trump in a deliberate move talked to his FBI Director alone and said about Flynn 'I hope you can let this go'. This is nothing short of telling his investigating official that you will have to do it in the midst of investigations itself. Trump plainly said that he wanted loyalty from the FBI Director to which Comey responded that Trump will get honesty from him.

US legal experts opine that what Trump has told Comey in the course of an ongoing investigations, is in the nature of a deliberate effort to impede the investigations and this is a sort of serious obstruction of justice. Experts are saying that Trump mentioning that Flynn is a good guy and "I hope you can let this go" is a sort of request with the essence of a directive. Comey also in his testimony mentioned this by stating that "I took it as a direction. I mean the President of the United States with me alone, saying 'I hope this'. I took it as this is what he wants me to do".

The Justice Department of the US administration has not yet said whether the special counsel Robert S Mueller is looking into any obstructions by Trump as a part of his new responsibility to look after the investigations related to Russian connections after the exit of Comey, but Comey said on Tuesday that he had already given his memos recounting conversations with Trump to Mueller for scrutiny. Since it was a one to one conversation and Trump was interested in keeping it confidential, Comey feared that Trump might not have kept tapes of the conversation.

Following Thursday's testimony by Comey, Trump has got no excuse left. His lawyer has tried to defend him by saying that Trump is not a liar and he did not specifically ask Comey to drop the Flynn investigations, but nobody

constitutional experts have mentioned of this possibility to the Republican Party leadership. As per this amendment, President George Bush handed power to vice president Cheney in July 2007 when he had to undergo a surgery. For 125 minutes, Cheney had full presidential powers.

According to the US constitution, the president in office can be impeached for treason, bribery or other misdemeanours. Bill Clinton was charged with obstruction of justice and with perjury for allegedly lying under oath to a federal grand jury about his affair with Monica Lewinsky. The current president can be charged for lying on a number of issues, including ties of his and his campaign leaders with the Russians, especially President Putin. So far, two presidents Bill Clinton (1998) and Andrew Johnson (1868) have been impeached. Articles of impeachment were passed against Richard Nixon by a congressional committee but Nixon resigned before the House of Representatives could vote on the matter. That way, technically, Nixon was not impeached.

The Presidential powers given to Cheney in 2007 for sometime was under a normal political situation. In the present surcharged atmosphere in the Republican Party and the White House, nobody has the guts to take up the talk of any alternative possibility with President Trump. So the Republicans are eagerly waiting for the newly appointed Mueller to come out with a report ruling out any involvement of Trump in the Russian affairs as also Trump did not put any pressure on Comey on Flynn issue. But if Mueller report also goes against Trump, the Republicans will have no option but to explore the possibility of replacing Trump without doing any long term damage to the Republican Party. (IPA Service)

### TO THE EDITOR

### Tripura Castle - a bad experience

Editor,  
With its open courtyards and wide spaces, a dining experience in Royal Heritage Tripura Castle restaurant could have promised to be a pleasant experience. Sadly, the treatment one is subjected to by the restaurant staff is in stark contrast to the ambience. On Sunday, 4 June 2017, I visited the restaurant with my parents-in-law, 7 year old niece and 4 month-old daughter. When we arrived we were told to wait for a table. I was slightly puzzled by the demeanour of the waiter. There was a sense of rudeness in the way he asked us to wait and the Hindi words used were "baithna parega." The normal practice in any good restaurant is to tell customers how long they are to wait for a table. Tripura Castle did not seem to believe in that kind of courtesy. Considering that we had come with a small baby and a child, I requested the food menu so that we could place our order whilst we waited to be seated. After 10 minutes of waiting and no sign of the food menu, I went into the restaurant to remind the staff of my request. In response, the cold stares that I received from the waiters made me feel as if I had intruded into their personal space. I spent more time waiting for the menu, and started to wonder if I had embarrassed myself by asking for something they deemed below their dignity.

Thankfully, the menu card finally arrived. We placed our order, and continued to wait patiently for our table. I carried my daughter from one place to the other to keep her entertained and comfortable. 20 minutes later another group of a similar size arrived. We continued to linger around under the watchful eyes of the waiters. By now 45 minutes had passed, and we were very hungry and tired. I then noticed that a suitable table was being cleared. We relaxed finally, and started to get our belongings ready. However, the staff decided to seat the group that had arrived twenty minutes after us.

My parents-in-law and I immediately lodged our protest. In reply, we received a cold and callous apology from the manager with a suggestion to wait for a further 10 minutes. His tone and demeanour promised no assurance or sincerity. My mother-in-law expressed her displeasure at what clearly appeared to be preferential treatment. The manager had no remorse, let alone any sense to remedy the ill-treatment meted out to us. I would sum up my experience as a very unpleasant one: the staff are arrogant, unprofessional and incompetent. Instead of demonstrating the culture of hospitality, the restaurant staff exhibited nothing but their riches of embarrassment.

Your etc.  
Fouzia Zafar,  
OP Jindal Global  
University,  
Sonepat

### High Courts still named after old city-names?

Editor,  
There was a move from Central government sometime in January 2015 for renaming Bombay and Madras High Courts after long years of renaming these cities as Mumbai and Chennai. But till now that change has not been effected. Even Calcutta High Court is to be renamed as Kolkata High Court. It is significant that except for four High Courts at Mumbai, Chennai, Guwahati and Kolkata respectively, all other High Courts are named after states of their jurisdiction. An RTI response had revealed that while all the High Courts constituted after independence, (with the exception of Gauhati High Court established in March 1948) were named after respective main states of jurisdiction, the three High Courts constituted by British regime in pre-independence era continue to be named as per British legacy on the basis of cities of their existence even after 70 long years of independence.

Union Government should end the British legacy by renaming Bombay, Madras, Gauhati and Calcutta High Courts now as Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, Assam and West-Bengal High Courts respectively to bring uniformity in system of naming High Courts after names of states rather than

on particular cities. Proposed legislation should incorporate feature that names of High Courts may be automatically changed with change in name of states (or cities) without needing any legislation.

Yours etc.,  
Madhu Agrawal  
Delhi-6

### Roads are the lifeline!

Editor,  
After a being criticized for being an MP without much impact in Parliament and without raising questions on the overall economic and social development of our state, now before his tenure ends Mr Vincent Pala, MP has drawn the attention of the Union Ministry of Surface Transport to the need for urgent construction of the Dkhiah-Sutnga - Molsei road under Saipung Block an area which never ever witnessed good roads or development. The Ministry has given the green signal for construction of this road. I have been involved in the area for a long time and therefore understand that a good all-weather road is imperative for connecting Saipung to the rest of the state. This route has been in the blueprint for ages but with the NDA government taking a positive initiative in improving and uplifting the rural areas, this successful in principle agreement is a welcome step. The efforts put in by

the Hon'ble MP are appreciated and shall be remembered for connecting several villages lying in remotest part of Saipung Block.

Yours etc.,  
Dominic S. Wankhar  
Shillong

### Types of violence!

Editor,  
Violence can be classified into two major types - 1) aggressor's violence and 2) violence for self - defence or deterrence. It is mainly because of aggressor's violence that the world has come to such a pass. Wars, rapes, ragging, abuse, bullying, lynching, murders, reckless driving, genocide, sadism and jingoism are all ugly manifestations of it. Unfortunately, the cowards among us glorify violence. A soft spoken gentleman is pooh-poohed and branded as a weak person. To add insult to injury, some advertisements and movies are hell bent on promoting carelessness, callousness and cruelty. As a result, shouting, reckless driving, utterance of foul language and slavery to liquor have been accepted by society as macho qualities. Indeed, these qualities have often been set as benchmarks for entering the adult world. But they are the intrinsic qualities of a coward.

As it is said ~ charity begins at home, we can and should clean out Type-1 violence from our minds. We can make our children understand that their freedom ends where the other person's nose begins, otherwise, liberty will be lost

in a jungle raj where only the fittest brutes can survive. If we can restrict Type - 1 violence then we will also automatically be able to check the second type as the latter is but a reaction to the former. So long as Type - 1 violence rules the roost, we cannot criticize Type - 2 which is for self - defence or deterrence. Recently, what happened in Kerala when a girl bobbitised an aggressor is a case in point! We should hang every killer rapist (Nirbhaya or Rohtak or Canacona) or at least keep them in jail till their deaths. This violence is absolutely necessary to counter macho or sadistic designs. Type - 2 violence will act as a deterrent to Type - 1.

Also, there are two additional types of violence. Violence for food can be branded as Type - 3 violence. We cannot do without it until we solve the problem of food. But we must minimize cruelty to animals and plants as far practicable.

Finally, violence against self can be listed as Type - 4. However, masochism and suicide as a result of masochistic tendencies can also be seen as Type - 1 violence because they are unprovoked violence against one's own body. And euthanasia and suicide in extreme condition can easily be put in Type - 2 category as they are a reaction to violence in the form of unbearable pain.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Kolkata

# The Harvest Shall Come

Farmers from the US to India adapt to the global challenge of climate change.

Renee Hickman from Missouri and Tanushree Sen from West Bengal report

Liz Graznak is the co-owner of Happy Hollow Farm, a family operation located on the rolling hills of Jamestown, Missouri, where she grows crops like tomatoes, greens and corn.

Graznak said she's seen big changes in weather conditions since she started farming 10 years ago. These days, she said, "it's more extreme one way or the other."

This and other effects of climate change represent a global challenge, and farmers like Graznak have found themselves on the front lines of the struggle to adapt.

For her, that's meant altering the way she farms. Large tunnels covered in plastic dot the seven acres where she grows vegetables, protecting them from greater variability in rainfall and temperature. "More plastic is the way that I feel like most mid-Missouri small-scale farmers are trying to deal with the challenges of the weather," she said.

In the village of Joynagar in Bankura district, in West Bengal, Srimonto Soren is dealing with such challenges in his own way. He grows rice, long beans (which resemble green beans), and lady's fingers — better known in the US as okra. Date palms and shrubs grow along a flat landscape where the red soil can be hard to grow crops in.

Like Graznak, Soren has been farming for the past 10 years and noticed shifts that affect his livelihood, such as rainfall that's now "more erratic and unpredictable." Soren and other farmers in the area look to low-cost ways to adjust to these shifts, such as making vermicompost, produced when earthworms speed up the breakdown of organic waste. The product is then added to the soil to make it more fertile and resilient to variable weather conditions.

In the agricultural heartlands of India and the United States, extreme weather events have caused damage to millions of acres of crops. Not only does this jeopardise the incomes of farmers, it puts food supplies in the US, India and the world at risk. Farmers are divided on the root causes of climate change. But experts who work to help them adapt say farmers are increasingly united in the recognition that their environment is changing. In places as far-flung as West Bengal and Missouri, farmers have very little choice but to seek out practical solutions to preserve their livelihoods.

According to data from NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the years 2014, 2015 and 2016 were each the warmest years on record. Climate change experts say the warming climate is driving up the numbers of droughts, floods, storms, heat waves and other weather events that can devastate crops.

## Water Woes

For farmers in both India and the US, wild changes in precipitation can cause some of the most immediate problems



connected to climate change.

As the earth's surface warms, water from oceans, lakes, rivers and streams evaporates and rises, gathering in the clouds and resulting in rain, storms and snowfall. At other times and in other places, the warming climate increases and intensifies droughts.

All farmers depend on some level of predictability in the weather to manage their businesses. Large fluctuations in precipitation patterns can result in issues such as changes to planting and growing seasons and lower crop yields.

Extreme rainfall has devastated many farms in India. In March 2015, heavy rain fell throughout India. In states such as Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, it was the wettest spring in decades, if not on record, according to the Centre for Science and Environment in New Delhi.

Farmers in parts of India plan for occasional heavy rainfall, since they are a regular feature of the climate in many regions of the subcontinent. But that spring saw especially intense rainfall even for a

string of years with precipitation far higher than normal.

The rains came just as farmers were preparing to harvest their winter crops — from wheat and sugarcane to mangoes and bananas — and the impacts were huge. In Uttar Pradesh, the most affected by the event, crops in more than 65 per cent of the affected area experienced 33 per cent or more damage, data from the centre shows. That cost farmers more than \$3 billion.

In Missouri, farmers are also feeling the effects of volatile precipitation levels.

Jerry Hatfield, laboratory director at the National Laboratory for Agriculture and the Environment for the US Department of Agriculture, said dry summers reduce farmers' yields and their profits go down. Wet springs, meanwhile may delay planting because the soil is so waterlogged. Again, farmers lose money.

Dr Patrick Guinan, a professor of climatology at the University of Missouri, said wet springs are the biggest problem for farmers in Missouri right now.

## Farming in the US (left) and in West Bengal's Bankura district

You can go back 30-40 years; you're not going to find a wetter period in Missouri," he said.

## Livelihoods at stake

Hatfield, who co-authored a climate adaptation workbook aimed at farmers in the Midwest, travels often to rural areas in the region, giving presentations on measures farmers can take to make their crops more resilient in the face of increasingly variable weather patterns. He said the farmers he talks to have many questions about how to protect their crops. "They live and they survive around the weather conditions they're experiencing," Hatfield said.

Richard Oswald, head of the Missouri Farmer's Union, said many farmers he works with can be resistant to change, but are willing to do what they need to do to protect their crops when their livelihoods are at stake. "Some of them are early adopters," he said. "Others have to watch that for a long time before they're really ready to make a change."

When Hatfield talks to farmers about adaptation methods, he says he finds it best not to push them toward any particular course of action. "Every one of them kind of makes their decisions a little bit differently," he said. "They've got to adapt it into their system."

To keep the conversation focused on what farmers can do in the face of an already changing climate, Hatfield steers conversations away from discussions of the causes of climate change that have become increasingly partisan in recent years. A poll by the Pew Research Centre, a non-partisan think tank in Washington



## DC, found that in 2016, 70 per cent of people who supported Hillary Clinton for president believed climate change is due to human activity, whereas only 22 per cent of Donald Trump's supporters agreed. "I've become very artful at dodging that whole question," said Hatfield.

But Hatfield says the farmers he speaks to don't doubt that things are changing. "They see the evidence and they live that evidence. Most of them are saying: How do I cope with this?"

## Preparing for the future

While adaptations can help farmers worldwide face the climate change effects happening now, some scientists argue they will be insufficient later on.

The International Centre for Advanced Renewable Energy and Sustainability at Washington University in St Louis supports research into climate. A recent paper by a team at the centre suggested that eventually, the Midwest's agricultural profile may come to resemble that in a very different area of the country — the mid-South. The paper says aggressive research into how farmers can cope with dramatic changes are necessary if the region known as the nation's bread basket will continue to be able to produce anything like the yields it has in the past.

In India, the situation is becoming similarly extreme. Vineet Kumar, a program officer at the Centre for Science and Environment said the number of floods and droughts has brought India's agriculture to a state of crisis. While those events take a tremendous toll on farmers in developed nations, they can be even more destructive in places in India where infrastructure is

weaker and farmers have less access to new adaptation techniques.

Like Missouri farmers, Kumar says Indian farmers have a deep awareness of the effect variable climates have on their crops. "While they may not understand the greater effects and implications (of) global warming or climate vulnerability, they are very much aware of its daily effects," said Kumar. The stakes are high in India. According to the latest census there, 69 per cent of India's population lives in rural areas. "Many of them are directly dependent on climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture, forestry, livestock, fishery, etc, not only for income and employment but also for basic food and nutrition security," said Rajashree Joshi, member of a team looking at climate change adaptation with Bharatiya Agro Industries Federation.

With no end in sight to these variations, researchers are trying to find ways for farmers to cope moving forward.

In Missouri, a team at St Louis University is exploring how genetic factors in the root systems of grapevines affect their leaves, fruits, stems and other characteristics refer to as "scion traits".

One researcher on the team, Missouri State University Professor Lazlo Kovacs, says the process of identifying how those traits are produced could one day help identify ways to breed more resilient plants. That way, even if conditions get far worse, farmers can buy seeds to grow plants that can survive and feed us in the future. Whether adaptation methods are cutting edge, or build on techniques that have been used for centuries, farmers across the globe remain at the forefront of the effort to adjust to the demands of a rapidly changing climate. Their choices will have far-reaching impact on the world's food supply and therefore everyone on the planet in the years to come. (IBNS-TWF)

# 'It's a collective responsibility to improve education system'



Deborah Marak during the foundation stone laying ceremony of Rongsakgre Higher Secondary School in West Garo Hills in April

Shillong has ceased to be the education hub of the North East. The increase in pass percentage in SSLC and HSSLC is either marginal or none. This year's SSLC toppers' list leak added insult to the injury. The scenario in rural areas is the worst. The Government allotted Rs 909.94 crore for education in this year's budget and proposed several schemes to rejuvenate the system. But how serious is the Congress-led Government to improve education system in the State?

School Education and Literacy Minister Deborah Marak tells Nabamita Mitra the department is working on all the weak points but the responsibility is collective and all stakeholders, including schools and parents, should also contribute in bringing about a change. Excerpts:

Nearly one lakh students dropped out of schools in Meghalaya in the past four years, government statistics show. How do you propose to improve this? The numbers that I gave at the Assembly is not completely correct because there are many children who are going back to schools. The number of children from among the dropouts was not mentioned in the House. But the government is already taking measures to control the dropouts the number of which is decreasing.

In some cases, like in the Garo Hills region, the matriculation results were poor and those who could not pass usually do not want to go back to studies. In such cases, it becomes a collective responsibility for the government, schools, parents and students improve the situation.

Why do you think Garo Hills put up a

poor show in SSLC and HSSLC? Why? How do you think it can be improved?

The main reason for such poor show is weak foundation in primary schools in rural areas.

There are proxy teachers in many interior schools and we have to stop that. We need trained teachers even in primary schools so that students have a strong base. I had been to some schools in Garo Hills where some of the students of classes VI and VII cannot read or write. This is sad.

There have been reports that owing to lack of vernacular textbooks students in rural areas cannot cope with the syllabus? Why aren't there any textbooks

laya was once an education hub. The problem is in rural areas and we can streamline and make the State a role model for others as far as education is concerned.

Has the government started rolling out Jodo-Gyan project for science and mathematics — the two subjects in which students perform poorly?

Yes, students' performance in science and mathematics is a concern for all of us. I think every school should look into it. Every school should take extra care to train their students, especially of classes IX and X. Schools should give tuitions, besides the regular classes. (The Government has initiated Jodo-Gyan and it will be rolled out to more districts. Marak had said in the budget session in March).

I am lucky to be his Cabinet minister.

Many colleges in Garo Hills do not have commerce...

Who said? Important towns like Williamnagar and Tura have commerce colleges. Many villages too have commerce colleges.

MBoSE is being pilloried by all after the results leak. Also, this coincided with the board ranking fourth among the top 10 Futuristic School Boards in India. How does it affect its credibility?

It was not a good thing to happen and definitely lessens the credibility of the board. But my colleagues in the department are hard-working and they promptly ordered a probe into the fiasco. These leaks, be it results or question papers, are causes for concern and these should not happen.

Again, as I said earlier, we have to work together so that the board (which is an autonomous body and I do not directly deal with it) too becomes a role model for other states to follow.

MBoSE wants to revise the syllabus of HSSLC. What kind of changes? Not everything. As and when it is required, we will do that depending on the changing time.

What are the challenges in implementing new ideas?

Education department is a challenging section. It is like a chronic disease and fun too. I believe there is solution to every problem. But there should be a collective responsibility of the government, teachers, students and parents to better things.

## TALKING POINT

in local languages?

I should not say that alone. We have to look at the teaching system in the State. As I said there are proxy teachers and untrained faculty members in many rural schools. That is the reason why students cannot cope with the pressure in higher classes. It has nothing to do with the syllabus. The syllabus has to be uniform. Also, every student has the right to quality education and access to qualified teachers. If there is any complaint, the government takes prompt action against errant teachers.

Many states have vernacular schools. Shouldn't there be vernacular schools in Meghalaya too?

Every state has its own system. Megha-

Many rural schools do not have buildings, leave apart other infrastructure. What is the Government doing?

The Government has taken over so many schools from district councils. In some places old buildings are being used as schools but in many villages, the Government has built buildings using central funds under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

Why did the government take time to solve the teachers' problems and let school education suffer?

Well, I don't know what happened before I took charge of the office. But the Government did solve the problem and teachers will get salary with cent per cent hike from July. Our chief minister, Dr Mukul Sangma, kept his promise and

# There's scope for innovations

By Ranjan K. Baruah

We have published about career options related to agriculture. In this edition we will talk about some options related to agriculture as career options. Students who wish to pursue a career in agricultural science should possess a strong base in subjects like biology, physics, chemistry and mathematics, among others. There are some diplomas and short courses which may not need science stream as base but it is always preferred to have science as the foundation stream. There are different avenues where there are opportunities for young people interested in agriculture.

Being an agro-based country, the government of India has created a wide platform to promote agriculture in a big way. Numerous schemes and programmes have been initiated which are designed to help farmers and others associated with agriculture. The organic food market in India is growing at 25-30 per cent and is set to reach 9,000 crores by 2020. India has a total of 118.9 million farmers, which accounts for 24.6 per cent of the total workforce of 481 million. Though several government initiatives have been formulated, challenges still exist. Aspirants may become successful through planning after knowing the problems.

**Agricultural Education:** This is one of the important areas as one may join as formal teacher or else may work with community for spreading education and awareness on agriculture. Teachers offer education in horticulture, biotechnology, environmental and natural resources, animal science, agricultural mechanics and other relevant courses for the industry while others may generate awareness for the betterment in the community.

**Food Sciences/ Processing:** Consumers are constantly in search of unique food products that appeal to a range of age groups, health condition and preferences in their families. And this is where the food processing industry makes tangible profit. Apart from food processing, students with a degree in food sciences put in their knowledge to grow and improve the food.

**Agricultural Engineering:** These engineers make use of their degrees for bringing innovations and implement solutions for issues related to the agro industry. They work



in the areas of bio products, livestock facilities, agricultural equipment, food processing, water quality and water management and much more.

**ICAR:** The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is an autonomous organisation under the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. The Council is the apex body for co-ordinating, guiding and managing research and education in agriculture, including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences, in the entire country. With 101 ICAR institutes and 71 agricultural universities spread across the country this is one of the largest national agricultural systems in the world.



**Updates**  
**Scholarships for Girls:** L'Oréal India has initiated the L'Oréal India for Young Women in Science Scholarship Programme, which encourages and supports young women to pursue careers in science. The programme was instituted in 2003 and has consistently helped young women to pursue scientific studies. A scholarship of Rs. 250,000/- each is granted

to promising but economically disadvantaged young women and covers college fees for study in any scientific field in a recognized college or university in India. Last date for applying is July 10.

(Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor and can be reached at [bkrnanjan@gmail.com](mailto:bkrnanjan@gmail.com) or 9864055558 for any career related queries)

# The conscious keeper

By Rajdeep Pathak

In a recently published article titled "All the President's Words" (The Hindu, May 28, 2017), the writer Varghese K. George argues how limited vocabulary can either make or mar a conversation pointing to US President Donald Trump who mixed and interchanged the words 'Islamic' and 'Islamist' during his address in Riyadh. The White House later clarified that the President was too 'exhausted'! The limited vocabulary — in this case of the US President — is in sharp contrast with his predecessor Barack Obama, the writer commented. That apart, Trump on earlier occasions too has had his brush with poor and sometimes callous words that created a flutter on social media — the latest one being 'Covfefe' which he tweeted on May 31, 2017. The search is still on for deriving its meaning.

But in a fast growing world of media where news (read information) travels faster than the speed of light, the way and manner in which words are spoken can indeed turn the tables around.

Where positive news may get a thousand plus likes and few comments on social media, negative news can create disorder in the society.

There has been of late too much dependency (read craving) on/for social media for sharing, communicating and disseminating information. And people all over the world tend to believe this shared information, even when they spring from rumour mills.

In their annual Digital News Report released in early 2016 by the "Reuters

**Social media, one could argue, is a noble outcome of the unheard voices, of stories of injustice, prejudices, challenging orthodox social norms and customs, religion, economy and so on**

Institute for the Study of Journalism" — based on a survey carried out in 26 countries in Europe, Asia, North America and South America — it was found that more than half of online users use Facebook and other social media sites such as Twitter as their news sources. Facebook dominates the space with 44 percent.

Social media, one could argue, is a noble outcome of the unheard voices, of stories of injustice, prejudices, challenging orthodox social norms and customs, religion, economy and so on. One could also give examples of the positive role this form of media plays in the society acting as a catalyst of change. But more than often, such a form of media has violated the (social media) guidelines resulting in chaos within the country, posing another grave debate on 'media literacy'.

Jharkhand, Bangalore, Muzaffarnagar in Uttar Pradesh, Kashmir are some glaring examples in the recent past of how distorted use of social media can drastically affect thousands of lives of innocent citizens and shake the social foundation.

Rajeev Bhargava, a political theorist with the 'Centre for the Study of Developing Societies', New Delhi, in his article, "What Emperor Ashoka knew

about free speech" (The Hindu, May 28, 2017), points: "If words fall off the tongue effortlessly, tumble out inadvertently and, what is worse, ceaselessly, it is imperative that unguarded speech be checked, that words be enunciated with great care and thought in public". Bhargava was referring to the principle of *vācāguti* (the artful management of the tongue) and *samyama* (self-restraint) as laid down by Emperor Ashoka.

Verbal duels, speech fights, word-wars were common during those times, and so the emperor in order to ensure that civility persisted, laid down these guiding principles.

Talking about commitment to fairness and accuracy, independence and a pursuit of truth, President of India, Pranab Mukherjee, while delivering the 2nd Ramnath Goenka Memorial (RGM) Lecture said, "Facts must never be sacrificed to elevated opinions as truth. It must raise and create awareness about issues concerning public welfare, hold public or private institutions and their representatives accountable for all their actions or indeed their inactions."

While saying that the growth has resulted in a plurality and diversity in the excess of information, the President

also expressed his concern on unchecked news

"The media... can build a thoroughfare, where ideas can travel up and down, to and fro, as it strives continually for accountability and transparency in public life," he had said.

Here comes the relevance of policing or having control over unfettered news. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has often spoken about 'SMART' Policing where 'S' means strict but sensitive; 'M' means modern and mobile; 'A' stands for alert and accountable; 'R' for reliable and responsive and 'T' for techno-savvy and trained.

Engaging with the media is a matter of literacy in a broader perspective. People's engagement with media, especially new media is framed by the kinds of interactivity the media world shares with the public. But our propensity to be impatient at the slightest of things could cost us our right to life, liberty and free speech. Restrain and refrain are the two key words.

Pranab Mukherjee had rightly emphasised that "Discussion, dissension are crucial to public debate for decision-making in a healthy democracy such as India's. There should always be room for the Argumentative Indian, but not for the Intolerant Indian".

As a fourth estate, the media stands as a 'conscious keeper' forming a bridge between the other three pillars — executive, legislative and judiciary — jostling with different opinions and giving a voice to all.

(The author is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti)

# Award remembers Amita Dey

By Our Reporter

**SHILLONG:** Amita Dey became the first woman mobilising officer of the Fire and Emergency Services of West Bengal in 1974. A former student of Government Girls' High School on Jail Road here, Dey was a champion of girls' education.

"She would always say if the women in a family are educated then the entire family prospers," reminisces Shubhendu Ranjan Deb, her nephew.

This is the reason why Dey's family chose to extend support to the meritorious students of Government Girls' High School. The family dedicated the Amita Dey Memorial Award for Excellence in Studies for students of Classes X or XI.

This year, Sidaris Khongwet won the award. Dey was from the 1955 batch and left Shillong

in 1959 to pursue higher studies in Kolkata. She later settled in the city but never forgot her roots in Shillong where she would visit once in four to five years.

"My aunt would often talk about Shillong and say that was the best time of her life. She would tell us stories about her friends there and a Khasi lady whom she called 'maami'," says Deb.

Principal Lilian Mary Blah said it was an honour for the school and the award would encourage more students to perform well.

"Ours is a reputed school and students perform well in the board examinations. Iarilyne Diengdoh from the school ranked 18th in the SSLC examination this year. We want more students to do well and set an example for all as Dey did through her works and thoughts," said Blah.



Members of Dey's family with principal of Government Girls' High School Lilian Mary Blah at a function in the city

## 'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, June 11, 2017

Moon trine Venus on your solar return chart denotes a good year. You may see possibilities everywhere and that you can be more than just a cog in the all-important wheel of change. You also have big humanitarian tendencies, so helping others will be a major focus of the coming year. This year highlights your originality and has far-reaching ramifications. Let's say you invent something new or propose a new idea to a think tank or local charitable organization, and it's not likely to stop there. You're obviously destined to do great things for the world, and this aspect reminds you to go big or go home. Don't think local, think global and beyond.

**Aries: (March 21 - April 20)**

You are expected to gain momentum and it will be a good time ahead. You will have good ventures in the field related to publishing, writing and education. You will use communication skills to attract the people which may be favorable for your professional life. Amid some minor misunderstandings your family life will be soothing and enjoyable. Health should be looked after. Stick to routine work and have a suitable diet. Matters related to your career will be sorted out soon. Be prepared and watch for the favorable time which will be coming soon to boost up your business and career. Enjoy with children and loved ones.

**Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)**

You may have mixed results as predicted from the position of stars. You may be facing a not enviable position at your work place. Cooperation and amity is needed in your behavior with superiors. Think before you speak and be careful in what is performed by you in your career. There may be a temporary conflict in between your family or may they be not satisfied with your thoughts so try to be very tactful with your family and loved ones. Take care of self and your luggage in travels. There may be some expenditure which may disturb your budget, so spend wisely. Take care of your health. Your friends may help and guide you in matters related to material gains.

**Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)**

The position of stars predicts that you may be in a position to care for the health of a family member. You may have to look after your family and loved ones. Your emotions and feelings about your children may bear fruit. They will work according to your desire. Professional and career matters will need more attention these days. You are clever enough to so decide well before you start a new venture. You may have to face some problems in love life or marriage matters. Avoid having contacts with unknown persons at your work place. Health will need attention. You may have to take some precautions and also take morning walk to avoid stress.

**Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)**

This position of stars will give you some mixed results. Financial matters and profits will grow slow. You may take steps for entertainment and betterment of health of your family and children. Education and progress in career may get affected so you may have to consult your elders to sort out problems related to these matters. Your health will be good and may enjoy some trip with your family and children. You may have to work hard in order to maintain your image in public. Dispute in some common sharing matters related to property, joint finances or other resources within the family are more likely at this time.

**Leo: (July 23 - August 23)**

It is a time where you have chances of progress in profession and career. This is equally good for intimacy and friendship related matters. You may expand your social circle by image building and better communication skills. People recognize you by your talent and soft spoken words. You may have some sudden profits or achievements related to money, finance and real estate. You may have good opportunities for starting a new venture. Your marriage or love problems may get solved suddenly. Take care of your responsibilities and duties and let it not disturb your health.

**Virgo: (August 24 - September 24)**

Configuration of planets at this time depicts some mixed results. You may expect some uneasiness and unfavourable circumstances. Your friends and well-wishers may not support you at this time. Take up each matter related to

finance, profession or career wisely. You may be misled by some friends or an intimate person so keep watch over what transpires. You will have to decide every matter patiently and personally, do not give any opportunity for others to interfere in your work. Your life may take a new turn. Your love or romantic related problems will be sorted out. Love and affection among your family members is expected.

**Libra: (September 23 - October 23)**

A favourable combination reveals that there are good opportunities for you in regard to your job, work and investments. You may enjoy a time where your public image and business opportunities may get a new perspective of progress. You should keep yourself out of emotions and feelings and remain balanced and focused. Your family and children will enjoy your company in some outing. Love and affection with loved ones is assured. Sudden expenditure is expected and it may be for religious work. You may focus on utilizing this time in some important issues.

**Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)**

Stars depicts a time of monetary and financial gains for you. Take some wise steps in investments which will prove to be very beneficial for you in the long term. It may be a better time to carry your imaginations to a realistic stage. You will arrange to spend time with family, children or loved ones which will prove to be helpful in stability and peace of mind. Your courage will be remarkable and you will show your skills in order to have good combination of wits and health. Relations with friends will be good and your may enjoy good public relations. You could get involved in some charity work and improvement in social circle is also indicated.

**Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)**

You may plan to enjoy yourself and focus on matters related to entertainment and romance. You resolve problems of finance and money now. During this time you may buy products related to cosmetics, jewelry and clothing. You may give a change to your personality and outlook which may help you to be popular among friends and associates. You may engage yourself in some renovation at home or at your business place. Your vigour and courage will help you to achieve your goal. Many matters will go slow but these will be favourable for you. Health related problems may be checked in time.

**Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)**

Simply attending to your home affairs and making efforts for creating a loving environment and affection among your family members will give you satisfaction. Peacefully attend to your duties and give a bit more care to your professional work. You will prove to be good at making contacts in social life. You may take steps to take your career to new heights and achieving goals for success. Take care in travel and long journey for any injury. Health would need attention. Give due care to your children. Avoid showing some extra ordinary courage in matters related to friends and in public else you may get entangled in some conflict. Solve problems with a calm mind.

**Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)**

You may have some favourable scope in profession and career related to the armed forces. There are chances of promotion in your job. You may enjoy good health now. Financial and money problems will be resolved. If you are looking to start a new business you may go for it for profitable returns. You will enjoy interactions with relatives and friends. Marriage problems or children may get solved. You may plan for a long distance journey. Full efforts are required in love or romance affairs for stronger ties.

**Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)**

You will emphasize on improving your personal social image. You will get due regard from family and loved ones. This is a time where one should make efforts to make personal contacts within office or at your place of work. You will have wonderful relations with your family members and children. You may go with children and family members to an entertainment place or for religious trip. Spend time in creative ventures in order to have peace of mind. Keep up regular exercises in order to have sound and stable health. Money related problems will soon be resolved and gains are on the cards.

## Bank of Dad at your service

The train was so tightly packed that when I checked my current account balance on my phone, four people breathed in sharply and gave me sympathetic looks.

But then the girl left of me started playing Candy Crush and everyone's attention shifted to her.

With people and cameras everywhere, there's no privacy any more. If you need to adjust your underpants or unpick a wedgie you have to book a hotel room.

"I'd like to book a twin-bed non-smoking room for 30 seconds, please."

"Certainly sir. For a security deposit, we will require your credit card, house deeds and first-born child."

But stories of technology and humanity can create warm and fuzzy feelings, I learned from two recent news reports.

At the end of May, a jam-packed train on the way to a college in New York got stuck. Everyone was in a bad mood. One of the passengers was student Jerich Alcantara, dressed in university robes to receive his diploma. "I would like to thank you all for coming to my graduation," he joked. "It means a lot to me."

The carriage full of strangers laughed, someone found celebratory music to play, a diploma was zapped to his phone and suddenly it was a party. Someone filmed it for the internet, of course, and the result was that his graduation was witnessed by millions of people.

Then came a news report on tech-savvy accountant David Goodwin, who used geek know-how to get away with the perfect crime 100 times in a row. He turned up at a busy, charity-minded church in Northern Ireland with his laptop and offered to check the accounts. Since the members donating cash and the needy spending it

were highly trusting, he found it easy to transfer big chunks of money to his own accounts.

After two years stealing charity donations from the church, he'd committed his 100th crime and felt unstoppable.

But then the church had a guest speaker: A reformed criminal.

Everything the man said hit Goodwin like a thunderbolt from heaven.

Deeply moved, Goodwin spent the next few hours creating spreadsheets showing exactly how he had committed each of his 100 crimes, and then walked to the local police station, where he opened his laptop and said:

"Look what I've done."

That story also produced a warm, fuzzy feeling — which evaporated when I saw the next news report in my inbox.

Researchers say the amount of invisible, intangible money being spent every day (clicking to buy stuff) had overtaken the amount of actual physical money being spent every day. Coins and banknotes will disappear, pundits say.

This is bad. My main tool for impressing on my children the value of money is the extraneous slooooooow way I count out their pocket money every week, an expression of agony on my face. Sometimes I actually weep blood.

A quick click on a screen to transfer cash is not the same. It fails to convey the pain that needs to be associated with money moving away from Dad's pocket in any direction.

I'm going to do all my financial stuff on the train from now on. At least I get a bit of sympathy there.

(Nury Vittachi can be contacted at [nury@vittachi.com](mailto:nury@vittachi.com))

## Save hives, save bees

(Continued from last week)

It will take several years for the workers to find a queen and to regroup — if they live. Don't spray it with a soap and water mixture. People spray all the plant around with vinegar so that the bees die while collecting pollen, but this is a totally rabid and anti-environmental thing to do as you lose all the plants, and these may not even be the ones the bees are feeding from. Do not use insecticides.

The best way would be to encourage them to shift. This may take months, but at least you will not be murdering important beings — far more important than even you.

You should make every effort to relocate honey bees instead of exterminating them. Here are some suggestions. Try them all.

a) Hang some mothballs inside of an old nylon or thin sock close to the bee nest.

b) Bees will often relocate to be closer to their food source and are attracted to strong, sweet smells.

Cut soft, ripe pears or mangoes into chunks and place them into an open sandwich bag. Place this 15-20 feet away from the hive. After a few days, move the bait a few feet further away from the hive. Continue this process until the bees stop visiting the original location and have set up a new hive closer to the bag.

c) While bees are attracted to sweet smells, they are equally repulsed by pungent smells. One of the simplest methods to repel bees is to liberally sprinkle garlic powder in places where bees congregate.

d) Citronella candles will not harm bees and they will avoid any areas containing the smell. This helps protect some areas if you have a hive in your yard, and may prove partially effective in forcing a colony to relocate if the candles are being burned close to the hive.

e) Scatter a handful of cucumber peels as another natural form of repellent. The peels give off a scent that bees, and many other insects, find repulsive.

If you have access to, and are expert in, beekeeping and beekeeping equipment, take the big hive clump into a cardboard box (queen included) and then transfer the bees into a hive super-box with some frames.

This can be put a distance away in a wooded area and slowly the bees will start to relocate themselves.

(To join the animal welfare movement contact [gandhim@nic.in](mailto:gandhim@nic.in), [www.peopleforanimalsindia.org](http://www.peopleforanimalsindia.org))

**THE FUNNY SIDE**  
**Nury Vittachi**

*“A mother's yearning feels the presence of the cherished child even in the degraded man.”*

--- Sydney Smith

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 300

SHILLONG, MONDAY, JUNE 12, 2017

### No hard Brexit

BRITISH Prime Minister Theresa May's call for a snap poll has boomeranged on her. May remains Prime Minister but her Conservative Party has got a much reduced mandate-only 318 out of 650 seats in the House of Commons. Labour under Jeremy Corbyn has much strengthened its position. May's calculation that a greater Conservative majority in Parliament will strengthen her hand at the Brexit negotiations has proved wrong. The snap poll represents the second disastrous election called by a Tory Prime Minister in two years. Analysts will look for the reasons for the Conservative debacle. But there is no doubt that Brexit has no buyers in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Conservative will certainly cobble together a coalition government but May will no longer be in a position to pitch hard for Brexit which was the main plank of her election campaign. The British voters were concerned about a lower public spending which would have resulted from a hard Brexit.

There appears to be a consensus that the UK cannot completely divorce itself from the EU. That will complicate negotiations for triggering Article 50. Globalization is very much in its stride in Europe with Holland and France voting against isolation. The British want a more temperate approach to issues such as migration and trade. Young people voted in strength in the British elections, prompted by their interest in job opportunities abroad. They were naturally against Brexit. India will be naturally interested in the consequences of the results of the British election. The opportunities for Indian students to study in the UK will be widened.

### LOOKING BACK

April 20, 1989

### Bodo militants hurl bomb at bus: 1 killed

One person was killed and ten others were injured when Bodo extremists hurled bomb at a night service passenger bus in Dhubri District early this morning an official report received here said. The North Bengal State Transport Corporation bus with 39 passengers was on its way from Guwahati to Siliguri when the extremists threw the bomb near the Monopur inspection bungalow under Baribari police station of Dhubri district at about 2.15 am. A passenger, Anil Rana (23) was killed on the spot

while nine other passengers and the second driver of the bus Jawahar Nunia (42) were injured. Nunia was admitted to the Dhubri Civil Hospital while the other were given first aid.

A police party which rushed to the site on hearing the explosion recovered a hand made pistol, a live bomb and some arrows. In another incident, extremists set fire to a bomb loaded truck at Kachripara, under Tanga police station of Udalguri sub-division of Darrang district. The truck was completely damaged.

# Riddle of seismic disaster mitigation on way to solution?

By Dr. Arun Bapat

Anniversaries of natural happenings have been observed (or celebrated?) in various States since long. The NE Region had experienced a very large magnitude earthquake (of Magnitude = 8.7) on 12 June 1897. Today is the 120th Anniversary of this seismic event. Report on this earthquake by R D Oldham of Geological Survey of India (GSI) has initiated and established seismology on firm mathematical basis.

After the Bhuj earthquake of 26 January 2001 a number of organizations were established. At Government of India level the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) were established in 2005. At state levels, all States have established State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs). The aim of this exercise was to reduce the loss during disaster.

But even during a relatively less magnitude earthquake of 6.8 in Sikkim on 18 September 2011 it was not possible to save a single life. We have to think seriously why and where we went wrong? Whether it is planning, funding, organizational weakness, lethargic attitude, red tape or else? The answer to all these questions is change the focus of operational disaster management from post-disaster period to the pre-disaster period. Most of the disaster Management (DM) plans are focused and concentrated on post-seismic period. When the seismic shaking stops, the Disaster Managers rush to the site with stretchers, medical aid, food, mobile medical van and if required by helicopter etc and try to rescue the trapped people under the debris. They are able to save some trapped lives. But majority of the people are already dead. Unfortunately this is the present DM scenario in India. If the DM scenario is re-oriented from post-seismic to pre-seismic (including co-seismic period) it would be really effective in saving some lives. The pre-seismic efforts would include creating seismic awareness, educating people about various seismic precursors etc

The disastrous effects of earthquake could be reduced considerably if new houses are constructed and old houses are strengthened as per the seismic code provisions of the relevant codes from Bureau of Standards. But this is a time and money consuming process. If following points are followed it would be extremely useful to mitigate seismic disaster. These precursory observations are mainly valid for earthquake of magnitude 5.5 or more. For earthquakes of magnitude 5.0 or less this may not be observed. We would discuss three types of precursors (a) electronic type and (b) Using satellite data on real time basis and (c) biological precursors (human and animal behavior).

#### Electronic type seismic precursors

Before the occurrence of any moderate to large magnitude earthquake the hypocentral area (the underground location where actual rupture process occurs) gets heated. As the temperature rises, the geomagnetic field of the earth at that location goes on decreasing. The decrease adversely affects the propagation and reception of electromagnetic waves and communication. About two days before earthquake the landline telephone communication gets disturbed. The talk is accompanied with disturbing noise (khar-khar).

About 30 to 40 hours before earthquake, the reception on radio in the potential epicentral area, gets disturbed. If one is listening to a Radio programme at 1000 kHz, then the same station could be heard at 1100, 1200..1400 kHz etc.

There is an excellent example of difficulty in electromagnetic communication. Such communication system is used by police, fire brigade, army, aero planes etc for quick and easy communication. When an aero plane is approaching an airport, it contacts the airport by sending an electromagnetic communication system to the Airport Control Tower (ACT). The plane gets permission for landing. Few hours before the occurrence of magnitude 8.0 Haiti earthquake of Jan 2010, an aero plane could not establish contact with the airport and was forced to be diverted to other airport.

About ten hours before

earthquake, the television reception gets disturbed. The disturbances are audio, visual and spectral. The number of disturbances goes on increasing till the occurrence of earthquake. This was observed very effectively before the Latur (1993) earthquake.

The next and most important observation is from Mobile telephone. About 100 minutes before occurrence of moderate to large magnitude earthquake mobile phones are affected. If one or two mobile telephones are not functioning it may be due to defect of instrument. In case all mobile telephones within a large area of 15 or 20 km or more area are affected then it may be examined by calling places at longer distances (20 to 50 km or more). If so then it could be assumed that earthquake could occur. If all mobile telephones are not functioning then it could be sign of earthquake within next 100 minutes.

It would thus be seen that the electronically connected seismic precursors give indications initially about 40 hours before, then of about 10 hours then it reaches a level of 100 minutes.

#### Using satellite data on real time basis

Satellite borne data could be effectively used for earthquake forecasting and prediction on 24 x 7 bases. Some parameters could be extremely useful for short term earthquake prediction. These are Out Going Long Wave Radiation (OLR) and Total Electron Content (TEC). These are freely available on India Meteorological Department web and number of other webs pages. These data have been used fruitfully in the case of Bam (Iran), Bhuj (India), Muzaffarab (Pakistan), Sumatra (Indonesia) Sichuan (China) and Tohoku (Japan) Earthquakes. The North Eastern Satellite Application Center (NESAC) near Shillong has been doing good work and it could be requested to scout for such observations.

#### Biological seismic precursors

It has been reported and confirmed that all zoological specimen behave in abnormal behavior about ten hours before earthquake. All animals shout and become violent. If the animals are tied by rope or chain they want to be free. Domestic animals

such as cows, buffaloes, dogs, cats, horses, lambs etc show abnormal behavior about ten hours before earthquake. Birds do not sit on trees or in nest. They fly in groups at low height with shrilling noise. Rodents and reptiles come out of their hidings and move in a directionless way and they are frightened. Insects like millipedes, centipedes, ants, move in haphazard manner.

#### Domestic pets also shout and may become silent or violent.

About 15 to 30 hours before the occurrence of medium to large earthquake the number of Patients from OPD and delivery cases shows a sudden rise. The rise could be three to five times the daily average value. With high magnitude it could be of the order of about five to seven times the daily values.

Some ailments such as High Blood Pressure, Headache, Vomiting, Migraine, Uneasiness, and Depression are caused by some disturbance or provocation. But these ailments are highly manifested without any cause or provocation. Patients are more confused due to this sudden intensification of ailment.

Clubbing the three precursors would give a realistic visualization of the seismic situation which could be effectively used to mitigate the seismic disaster.

A rough estimate of earthquake magnitude and effective distance is possible in a thumb rule type derivation. For magnitude 6.0 to 7.0 the precursors are highly predominant up to a distance of about 250 to 350 km radius. For magnitude large than 7.0 it could be observable up to 500 to 600 km radius. This is rough estimate and there could be variation of some percentage. These instructions may be circulated to all the concerned departments. In the seismically active regions, these may be broadcast on radio and telecast on television.

If these instructions are followed it would be possible to reduce the loss of lives and property during earthquake.

The author is a Research Seismologist from Pune  
arunbapatq@gmail.com

## Banking On Economy Search for new farm path

By Shivaji Sarkar

The country needs to adopt a new economic policy. The three years of NDA government has seen an effort to break away from the past. It needs more vigorous effort and wide discussion to chart out the new course. The change needs to be drastic. The political system has to take over the reins to root out poverty, which despite statistical jugglery, in real terms has not come down. The slowdown is palpable. Jobs are inadequate and it is not matching the growing numbers of those without jobs. Even overall growth has come down, as per official statistics. Inflation is projected to remain low except in food items, projects the latest Reserve Bank of India monetary policy.

Thus should not the interest rate be further lowered to pep up the housing industry, boost consumption and industrial activities? That is what common logic says. Is the RBI going beyond it? So it seems. It is viewing the situation with a different glass. The latest June 5, 2017 monetary policy seemingly has many doubts about the economy. Rightfully so.

"Past episodes have shown that when there are significant fiscal slippages, they do permeate through inflation sooner or later. Farm loan waiver is a path that we need to tread very carefully before it gets out of hand", is the circumspect observation of RBI Governor Urjit Patel while releasing the monetary policy. This means that interest rates should not be lowered for a tottering banking sector with almost Rs 12 lakh crore of bad loans touted as NPA.

Should we not give farm loan waivers? Is it not a queer logic against the political wisdom? The Uttar Pradesh government has waived Rs 36,000 crore worth loans. Now farmers in MP and Maharashtra are up in arms. There are forces which are trying to cash in on it. The total waiver would cost Rs 3 lakh crore – a huge sum for an economy that is trying to find its moorings.

Farmers have a strong logic. If big houses' loans of Rs 1.5 lakh crore, which benefits some individuals, could be waived off why not for lakhs of farmers and their families? Again this is a "sound logic". It should remain just at that. The money waived either for big houses or farmers was lent to them by hard earned deposits of citizens. Do banks have the right to waive it? In the case of the industrialists the banks did it. The farmers' loan waivers are done by State governments, as in UP, or as in the past by the Central government. It was taxpayers' money that needs to be used for furthering growth and development of the country. Thus it is a convoluted economic prudence. Additionally, there is a human angle as also statistics. Over 54 to 58 per cent, as per official statistics, of the people are dependent on farms for their livelihood. It comes to approximately 75 crore people. The farmers have problems of high input cost and low and sometimes negative returns. It hits this large population and the economy starts tottering again.

The so-called 1991 "economic reform" and the 1995 WTO rules of the Agreement on Agriculture targeted ending farm subsidies. It caused enormous misery for the farm sector and abated innumerable suicides. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) says 256,913 farmers committee suicide between 1995 and 2011.

What UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath did could be humanist but is not for a long term solution. The country needs to chalk out a strategy for the farmers away from the banks and the politics of waiver. Reducing interest rates is a blow to the sick banking industry, funded fully by the common man through their deposits or "recapitalising" with taxpayers' money. Both are imprudent. Low interest rates hit the common depositors. Banks are also failing for their uncontrolled profligacy. If charges continued to rise the depositors would prefer to opt out of the banks.

This would solve the triple problems – interest rates need not be tweaked, recapitalisation at taxpayers' cost could be avoided and people would not have to pay illegal and extortion bank charges. The glorious side is the banks would have less to worry about managing the funds, which will not be there and since they would not be able lend to large houses, their NPAs would be wiped off. Yes, if people move out of banks that grew with small savings, ultimately the banks would have to fight for their existence - a normal economic fall-out. Therefore, the banks need to redo their mathematics and do away with extortion charges on each transaction. If they have failed for their bad management, they cannot tax the people and take the economy on an inflationary ruinous path.

The nation has to give deeper thought towards the farmers and the agricultural sector. Flip flop policies over the past 26 years, treating industry separately from the farms and levying of queer charges by all services including railways, where you lose more than half of the money for cancellations, though trains go overfull, or airlines where you do not get a refund, super high tolls, extortion income tax, profession tax and plethora of others are putting a brake on consumer expenditure. This has made prices rise and lowered purchasing capacity. It has hit farms, industry, and core sector all alike.

The nation needs to do a rethinking. The farmer and farming has to be at the centre of the discussion. The Narendra Modi government is seized of it but cobweb of rules, procedures and complicated economic situation has prevented it from having the desired solutions. It is imperative to keep the economic costs low and farmers in a happy state for peace, growth and taking the country to the path of being a super power. Industrial growth is linked to happiness in the farm sector. It can check migration, put development at fast pace and a properly tended farmers would not need loan waivers.

There is no denying that the economy was slowing even before demonetisation. Demand was coming down. If this has to be reversed it can be done on a holistic approach of recalibrating and integrating the economy. Piecemeal approach has caused enormous problems. A new thinking on subsidies and direct benefit transfer (DBT) is required. All subsidies are not bad. Modi needs to initiate the process of finding the new path for a benevolent farm policy targeting sustenance to the smallest farmer. It has to be intertwined with a forward looking industrial approach and creating the critical industry-agriculture balance. ---INFA

### TO THE EDITOR

### Loss to Meghalaya Agriculture

Editor,

On May 18 last, the Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu had called on the Union Minister of State for Agriculture & Welfare, Sardarshan Bhagat to seek Centre's support for establishing a full-fledged Agriculture University in Arunachal Pradesh. Further, Khandu has also impressed upon Mr Bhagat to consider for a Centre of Excellence for Horticulture in Arunachal Pradesh. The Union Minister of State has assured Khandu to peruse the requests and promised to proffer all out support for the establishment of such an enviable full-fledged farm-based academic centre. Thus, Arunachal Pradesh can rightly boast of having achieved another grandiose mile-stone of development in as much as the Central Govt. could favour this saffron-ruled State in its demand. It is lamentable to put it on record that this Agriculture University was in the first place offered to Meghalaya more than a

decade ago, to be precise way back in 2003 in Ri-Bhoi District on a 200 acre of land but, to most, it is still anybody's guess as to why that dream proposal had not become a reality in Meghalaya. Either way, the most potent reason why our State was denied this unique opportunity was evidently owing to the couldn't care less attitude and half-baked professional approach of those at the helm right from the grass-roots level to the highest echelons at that opportune moment, thereby letting slip away a god-sent opportunity. Nonetheless, there were a few State Agriculture Officers like Dr. R.B. Dympep, former Director of Agriculture Department, Meghalaya as well as from bureaucratic levels looking after the Agriculture sector who had selflessly tried their level best to pave the way for this Agriculture University in Meghalaya but, regrettably, their sincere efforts proved a non starter for reasons best known to successive governments. The establishment of such a University could have gone a long way in ensuring not only the progress of the farm sector to dizzying heights in

Meghalaya but also open up potential avenues of employment generations to jobless youths just like the establishment of NEIGRIHMS in Shillong has benefitted not only by rendering quality and cost effective health care to people but also by opening unprecedented scope of employment to the unemployed army of youth of the State. I hope those sitting in the corridors of powers are listening!

Yours etc  
Mr. Jerome K. Diengdoh  
Shillong -2

### Who will take Meghalaya forward?

Editor,

The game is up and the pre-election wheels are hotting up in the state against the Congress. A 'maha-gatbandhan' of political foes turned friends typical of what happened in Bihar is something that the two major regional parties UDP and HSPDP have forged. It is something to watch out for in the coming months. That regional parties can stake claim to

form a government is uncertain given the voter demography which constitutes a big chunk of non-tribals. There's a possibility that their votes would equally sway towards either the BJP or Congress. The erstwhile Regional Party Alliance could not bring any positive outcomes in the past as the result was political squabble for cabinet posts and other similar selfish drive of every political party. As such the road map and the vision document of the regional parties is not clear and what kind of arrangement they would have is a distant dream to foretell. Whatever be the results the question is who can deliver and provide leadership to take Meghalaya forward.

Yours etc....  
Dominic S. Wankhar  
Shillong

### In 2018, CM should be from Jaintia Hills

Editor,

The recent statements of UDP's Member of District Council (MDC) H.S Shylla,

(ST May 20, 2017) to the effect that it was time that the next chief minister of Meghalaya should be from Shillong (Khasi Hills) in 2018 rather than Garo Hills which has given us many CM's are absurd. Going by Shylla's logic that the District represented by Chief Minister sees more development, then in my humble opinion, the next Chief Minister should be selected from such regions of Meghalaya like the Jaintia Hills which have seen lesser levels of development since the creation of Meghalaya in 1972. So far the district has produced only Deputy Chief Ministers. I hope soon we will be producing a Chief Minister because a CM from the Jaintia Hills would then be able to give attention to the needs of the district. At this moment, I am tempted to say after Martin Luther King, I too have such a dream for the Jaintia Hills District.

Yours etc.,  
Dr Omarlin Kyndiah,  
Via email

### Plight of farmers

Editor,

The death of six farmers

in police firing in Madhya Pradesh is horrific. We are achieving success in space one after another. But are we really trying to improve the lot of our small farmers? Are our policies meant for the people in general? How long are we to stay put at and around 131st position in Human Development Index? When will we give small and marginal farmers "the ownership and control of the material resources of the community," as enshrined in Article 39 (b) of our Constitution? When will our people "have the right to an adequate means of livelihood," as per the Article 39 (a) of the Indian Constitution? And when will we follow Article 39 (c) so "that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few"?

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Kolkata

Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.

*“A comfortable old age is the reward of a well-spent youth. Instead of its bringing sad and melancholy prospects of decay, it would give us hopes of eternal youth in a better world.”*

--- Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 303 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, JUNE 15, 2017

### Darjeeling rocked!

THE Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) has launched an agitation in the Darjeeling hills. Two government offices have been set on fire. The stir is over the West Bengal government's declaration to make Bengali compulsory in all schools. Chief minister Mamata Banerjee is facing a state of violence in the hills hurting tourist trade. It goes without saying that GJM violence is unjustified. Agitations should be peaceful. Whether or not Bengali should be made compulsory is debatable. Nepalis do not form a majority among the population in the hills. Mamata Banerjee has now reversed her position saying that Darjeeling schools will be exempt from compulsory Bengali policy. The NDA government has been under fire for trying to impose Hindi on non-Hindi speaking states. If the centre is to be criticised, so should the Kerala government for making Malayalam mandatory in all schools. The West Bengal government should make Bengali and Nepali optional in the schools in the Darjeeling hills area.

In a globalised world, language is linked with economic opportunities. Parochialism should be eschewed. No state government should promote a particular language at the cost of another. That will impair the national image of linguistic diversity. So far, so good. But in Darjeeling, language is the thin end of the weave. The demand for Gorkhaland has surfaced again and Central intervention has been asked for. Autonomy is fine, but not bifurcation of west Bengal.

### LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

### MPs plead for holding talks with Bodos

Members in the Lok Sabha today expressed their opposition to any further division of Assam and called for a negotiated settlement to the Bodo agitation. Participating in the resumed debate on the situation arising out of the agitation by the All Bodo Students Union for a separate state, the members said a solution to their genuine problems should be found within the state by redressing their genuine grievances.

Congress(I) member Mr Kishore Chandra Dev said there was no case for a further division of Assam. Creation of autonomous district councils was also not practicable. However, provisions could be made about the administration of

the sub-plan to solve problems related to land transfer, he said. He urged the centre not to make political capital out of the Bodo movement and said violence must be condemned simultaneously with efforts to bring the tribal population to the mainstream. Dr Gauri Shankar Rajhans (Cong I) said if the Bodo insist on central participation at the roundtable then the Assam Government must agree to it. Mr Parag Chaliha (AGP) said the Bodo question could not be looked at in isolation and asserted that the AGP Government had been quite prompt in dealing with the peoples grievances and in taking action in cases of violence.

# Farmers' Solution Loan waiver not the way out

By Moin Qazi

A resurgence of farm loan waiver culture in the Indian polity has got many economists and policy makers worried. In a country where bulk of the farm land is rain-fed, the need to offer some relief to a drought-hit farmer is real. It is an acknowledged fact that loan waivers are a wrong practice and have several inimical long term implications. They punish farmers who have been diligent with repayments and encourage errant behavior among recalcitrant borrowers - lax credit discipline and the use of borrowed funds for non-agricultural purpose.

The debt forgiveness in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh led to a growing chorus for a waiver of agricultural loans in Maharashtra. With Maharashtra also joining the farm loan waiver bandwagon, various State governments are expected to waive off \$40 billion of farmers' loans in the run-up to the 2019 general elections in the country, a global banking group has said.

Farm loan waivers will amount to 2 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) by the 2019 polls, as other States are also likely to follow the BJP's Maharashtra and UP governments, according to a Bank of America Merrill Lynch (BofA-ML) report.

Ashok Gulati, an agriculture specialist at the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations argues that this can spread like a contagious disease to most parts of the country and you will very soon see at least 3-4 States announcing similar farm loan waivers.

Loan waivers are both 'bad politics' and 'bad economics'. Loan waivers have an insignificant role in ending the current abysmal situation. In a sense, loan waivers recite a story of unfinished reforms in India. The question should be why almost 55% of the population produces just 17% of agricultural output. Unless this share of the population is empowered, loan waivers will remain an unsuccessful recourse.

Indebtedness is the most acute problem faced by small and marginal farmers. However, they mostly borrow from moneylenders and hence a loan waiver does not serve their cause. Affluent farmers are the real

beneficiaries of such populist policies. The problems faced by destitute farmers are complex and require a strong political will to address them. Their landholdings are below the economically viable threshold, thus resulting in recurrence of bad loans. Waivers can do little to end these deplorable conditions.

Frequent debt waivers may push banks to invest in alternatives to farm lending such as the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund instead of reaching out to individual farmers to meet their agriculture demands. This may indirectly boost the mushrooming of unscrupulous moneylenders.

Bankers mourn over large sums being invested

**The result is a cycle of bad loans and bad harvests following poor rainfall. Loan waivers have little role in ending the conditions that lead to such problems.**

only to buy seeds or fertilizers, rather than to invest in mechanisation. India is the world's second-largest producer of rice, wheat, cotton, and sugar. However, its productivity is well below the world average. Bankers stand and watch helplessly as there is a surge in the number of 'wilful' defaults among borrowers. Funds of agriculture end loans are diverted instead to marry off daughters, to become lenders themselves, build extensions for their farmhouses or to splurge on social occasions.

Farmers openly admit that the government knows they will sanction more loans and fall into the same trap again and will withhold repayment of these loans, waiting for the next election in hopes of a loan waiver. "The government knows we will take out more loans in the end and fall in the same trap again and will withhold repayment of these loans to wait for the next election for the loan to be waived," said Vital Mhaski, a cotton farmer in Maharashtra who is Rs 77,000 in debt. Some

of India's 263 million farmers have decided not to repay their debts, expecting loan waivers to mean they don't have to.

The problems of small farmers are complex and require a steely political will to be properly addressed. Their landholdings are below the threshold that is economically viable. The result is a cycle of bad loans and bad harvests following poor rainfall. Loan waivers have little role in ending the conditions that lead to such problems. Farming accounts for a mere 14% of India's GDP, much lower than 47% of GDP just after India's independence 70 years ago.

While the global average of landholding size is 5.5 hectares, the per capita availability of land in India from 1951 to 2011 declined by 70%, from 0.5 hectares to 0.15 hectares. In a sense, this is a

story of unfinished reforms in India. The question should be why almost 55% of the population produces just 17% of agricultural output. Unless this huge swathe of the population is empowered, loan waivers will remain a recurring feature of the landscape.

The causes of farmers woes have been consistently documented, but nobody wants to fix them: the tired soil, the high-cost seeds; the thirsty crops; the bone-dry skies, the sinking bore-wells, the increasing amounts of fertilizer to rejuvenate the land, pesticides, labour costs, the dowries, the mouths to feed, the debt, the women, the shame.

To improve their standard of living, farmers need to go beyond agriculture and enter the manufacturing or services sector. Most small-scale farmers would happily sell their land, if only they could be provided employment in its place. India's developmental failure since 1947 has been its inability to relocate people involved in agriculture to other industries and services. As the share of agriculture in the national

output pie falls, any crisis hurts those dependent on it gravely.

A sense of deep despair runs through the lives of farmers in India. They have lost all hope - and also the will to fight. An increasing number have opted for permanent escape from their physical and emotional pain by ingesting deadly pesticides.

According to the 70th Situation of Agricultural Households in India conducted by National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), 90% of India's farmers have less than two hectares of land. The survey says the average farm household makes less than Rs. 6,500 a month from all sources of income and they're only kept afloat by government schemes that funnel money to them and by periodic waivers of farm loans.

To improve their lives, farmers need a way out of agriculture and into the manufacturing or services sector. In fact most small-scale farmers would happily sell their land, if only they could be provided employment in lieu of it. India's developmental failure since 1947 has been its inability to move the huge mass of people involved in agriculture to industry and services.

More than seven decades after independence, India does not have a national agriculture policy. There is a need for an integrated approach - one that addresses source sustainability, land use management, agricultural strategies, demand management and the distribution and pricing of water. Compartmentalized responses are unlikely to be adequate to address the current crises.

A longer-term strategy would be to make farming steadily profitable. This would involve proper irrigation and water conservation, better market information and access for farmers, and the development of agro-industries. The decisions and actions that the country's leadership takes - or fails to take - now may shape the future not only of India's agriculture but its polity as well.---INFA

# The Shanghai Balance

By Kanwal Sibal

The significance of India's membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) should neither be exaggerated nor minimised. On the positive side it enhances India's regional status. The platform it provides to regularly interact with SCO members, especially the Central Asian states, and that too collectively, will enable a better understanding of the regional dynamics at work within the organisation. China and Russia have so far dominated the SCO, with China engaged in resource extraction projects such as oil and gas pipelines and promoting other forms of connectivity to create markets for China's exports, and Russia, with its limited economic and financial capacities, focusing on security issues centred around the threat of religious extremism and terrorism. India's entry acknowledges its role in building the future of this region. For the Central Asian states concerned about their independence, India's membership balances somewhat the preponderance of Russia and China, besides offering them structured access to another major partner for development promotion. India's membership expands the geographic and geopolitical frontiers of the SCO, with the views, interests and capacities of

in the unleashing of jihadi terrorism against the Soviets in Afghanistan, the Saudi-funded madrassas in Pakistan from which the Taliban arose as instruments in the hands of Islamabad to strategically control Afghanistan through the bonds of Islam and the safe-havens provided to the Al Qaida leadership on Af-Pak territory that provided the staging grounds for the Islamic movements threatening Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The strong re-emergence of the Taliban aided once more by Pakistan presents a major challenge to them and us. The SCO Declaration of 2001 as well as the SCO Charter of 2002 envisages cooperation in cracking down on terrorism, separatism and extremism, concerns about which have sharpened with the appearance of Islamic State elements in Afghanistan.

On the less positive side, China, which has always bracketed India's SCO membership with that of Pakistan, has succeeded in its objective, entrenching the hyphenation it makes between the two countries on the international stage. China's strategy is to deny any regional advantage to India vis a vis Pakistan, which is the logic driving also its opposition to India's NSG membership without Pakistan. This shoring up of Pakistan for China's parochial reasons caters to

**The SCO membership follows the same logic of working in all geopolitical spaces with a view to raising India's profile and enlarging its political, economic and security options.**

another Asian giant influencing the organisation's deliberations and decisions.

India's strategic interest in playing on as many geopolitical chess boards as possible, without being inhibited by renewed rivalries and changing equations amongst existing and emerging powers, is served by its SCO membership. In recent years India has been engaged in a strategic exercise to improve its relations with the US, preserve its traditional ties with Russia and engage with China positively despite differences. In a pragmatic approach to international relations India has strengthened military cooperation with the US and forged with it a joint strategic vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions even as it has participated in the Russia-India-China dialogue, subscribed to the BRICS agenda and become a founding member of the China-promoted Asian Infrastructure Investment Fund. The SCO membership follows the same logic of working in all geopolitical spaces with a view to raising India's profile and enlarging its political, economic and security options.

Central Asia is well within India's strategic perimeter. Because the region is landlocked and the traditional access to it through Afghanistan has been blocked by Pakistan, the feeling of its remoteness from us has grown. Yet, distance-wise Central Asian countries are much nearer to us than we realise. Almost all their capitals are closer to New Delhi by air than Trivandrum is. That the leaders of these Muslim countries are secular in their orientation and are opposed to religious extremism is a strategic asset for the region and important for our security. We have shared interest to counter threats to them from Islamic radicalism radiating from the Af-Pak region, the roots of which lie

Pakistan's paranoia of parity with India and reduces pressure on it to behave as a normal state. Even though Pakistan's hands on religious extremism and terrorism- key concerns of Russia and the Central Asian states- are unclear, its SCO membership obfuscates that reality. Regrettably, Russia, which had initially opposed Pakistan's membership because its role as a partner in combating terrorism was questioned by it, now acknowledges positively Pakistan's anti-terrorism credentials. How Pakistan, which continues to promote terrorism against India and Afghanistan, can cooperate within the SCO framework in combating religious extremism and terrorism is unclear. Modi was right to raise the issue of radicalisation, recruitment, training and financing of terrorists at Astana and the impossibility of finding a solution without coordinated efforts. That Pakistan should have been given preference for membership over Iran and Afghanistan which have major economic, cultural and direct security ties with Central Asian states reflects China's noxious clout.

India's membership will have other difficult aspects. We will have to decide on our participation along with Pakistan in SCO's joint military exercises. Modi rightly mentioned at Astana our desire to deepen regional connectivity but one that respects sovereignty, regional integrity, inclusivity and sustainability, which the BRI does not. How will we reconcile our opposition to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with the support it receives from all SCO members. Not only differences with Pakistan but also with China will have to be navigated by us in the SCO, even as we play a constructive role.

(The author is former Foreign Secretary)

### TO THE EDITOR

### Assembly Resolution on bovine slaughter

Editor,  
Apropos the lead story in *The Shillong Times* (ST June 13, 2017) regarding the Meghalaya Government's Resolution tabled in the House for immediate withdrawal of the central notification G.S.R. 494(E) Dated 23rd May, 2017 (bovine slaughter ban), I wish to state that though the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly was unanimous in adopting the resolution to be sent to the Government of India, I am not sure what the Central Government will do on receipt of the Resolution. I only hope that the Resolution is taken kindly. In fact, the Central Draft Rules were intentionally placed in the GoI website for over a month in order to solicit views, opinions and suggestions from the public as well as from the state governments. I don't know if anyone from Meghalaya or whether the Government of Meghalaya have sent in their opinions and suggestions on the draft Rules. If they have not done so because of ignorance

then why the hullabaloo? Ignorance is not bliss. However, if they wish to, they can still send their opinions and views but it is not certain what the government of India will do with those views and suggestions. I presume the Centre might have a second look by modifying the notified Rules.

The best and immediate course of action for the Meghalaya Government to do, if it is deadly against the notified Rules by the GoI, is to challenge the validity of the Notification in a court of law. This is simply common sense. Perhaps by now, the court order would have been out much before the tabling of the resolution. Meghalaya Government has its own legal advisers and attorneys. Where are they? Why not seek their advice? Does the government doubt their capability? Be that as it may, the people of Meghalaya and the Government need not be alarmed at the notification for its implementation rests with the State Government. The fact of the matter is that the present Government is alarmed, because elections are round the corner and they see this notification as the ideal bait to fish the

majority beef eaters of the state.

Again, nowhere has the resolution mentioned that 90 per cent of the cows bought by Meghalaya from other states of India are daily smuggled (illegally exported) to Bangladesh purely for slaughtering and for consumption as well as for exporting outside that country. In fact, none from the ruling and the opposition benches made any mention of it, not to speak of raising a debate on the gravity of continuous cow smuggling from Meghalaya into Bangladesh. The Principal Act as well as the notified Rules speak clearly against it. I wonder, if smuggling comes under the powers of the states and if the State of Meghalaya finds it hard to reveal the facts happening on the ground.

The Principal Act on Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 1960 and the Rules notified recently, clearly stipulate that cattle and especially the bovine stocks (livestocks) should be taken care of and their health and well being ensured. But till date, no one, not even the Government of Meghalaya, is able to ensure this aspect. Cattle are left at the mercy of the rearers and owners.

Even in the selection of beneficiaries for giving schemes for cattle rearing, the process is in shambles and not transparent at all. It is riddled with partiality. Assistance should be liberal but there is no encouragement from the department concerned to increase livestock production especially when the demand for meat, milk and other products far outweighs the supply. The Livestock Mission has no meaning at all if the attitude and the style of functioning of the Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Department cannot be overhauled and changed drastically. This Department should be accorded top priority (as it falls under the primary sector). It should also be allocated adequate funds.

Furthermore, I strongly question the statistics touted by the Government that the demand for beef in Meghalaya is only 23,634 MT per year and that about 11,000 MT have to be imported from outside. This statistics is supplied by armchair babus of the veterinary department. No realistic and authentic surveys were conducted by other independent bodies, NGOs or other agencies so

far in this regard. Most of the statistics on animals, crops, fish etc quoted in government documents including the Budget, are mere guessing games by bureaucrats. No genuine, painful and credible attempts have been made so far by them to ensure correctness of statistics. If statistics are wrong then the whole planning goes haywire.

Yours etc.,  
Philip Marwein,  
Viaemail

### Wanted a referendum on railways!

Editor,  
For too long the opposition for setting up a rail-head at Byrnihat has been going on. Wanton violent activities in this age is uncalled for and why should the KSU and its fringe elements resort to such behavior? Isn't there a way out to negotiate and arrive at an agreed settlement? We are living in the 21st century and not the Middle Ages. Today globalisation has impacted all our lives. The need for the rail-head up to Byrnihat for goods trains should be taken as a positive sign rather than opposing it. It is a hypocrisy

of sorts that some people just "love" to compare our state with others whereas when it comes to action, they act differently. Pressure groups are seen as alternative "weapons" to further a cause which is why a section of the business community remains divided on this issue and so elements like the KSU come in handy to be used as tools. The HNLC has seized this opportunity and threatened to use IEDs. This is fraught with danger and the HNLC should not compare the issues of Kashmir to that of Meghalaya. Such comparisons are odious. Perhaps the state government can hold a referendum to see how many support the rail-head and how many oppose it. Only then will a clear picture emerge whether people want a railhead up to Byrnihat.

Yours etc...  
Dominic S. Wankhar  
Shillong

Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.

*“A child who is allowed to be disrespectful to his parents will not have true respect for anyone.”*

--- Frank A. Clark

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 304

SHILLONG, FRIDAY, JUNE 16, 2017

### Home Minister's Mizoram visit

SINCE Prime Minister Modi took over the reins of governance in May 2014, he has been visiting the North Eastern states and spending time here. Having familiarised himself with the problems of each of the eight states, Modi had directed his ministers to not only make flying visits to the states but to also spend time there. Home Minister Raj Nath Singh had visited Nathu La the border between Sikkim and China last month and convened meetings with different agencies to speed up infrastructure development such as roads and air links in the border state. The North Eastern region shares 96% of its borders with foreign nations and only about 4% with India. It makes sense to build a system of communication networks with these neighbouring countries for trade and commerce. In 1991 India came up with a foreign policy for building trade relations with the countries of South East Asia. For nearly two decades the Look East Policy has become only a slogan. Prime Minister Modi wanted to see more action on this front and renamed it the Act East Policy thereby making India's relations with the East Asian neighbours a foreign policy priority.

From the very beginning the Modi government made it clear that India forge strategic partnerships with ASEAN countries and with Vietnam and Japan in particular. This Policy requires that communication bottlenecks between the North Eastern states and the neighbouring South East Asian countries, namely Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, Phillipines, Laos, Vietnam et al are removed and old trade routes rejuvenated. Home Minister Raj Nath Singh visited Mizoram this week to oversee the security aspects of the border between that state and Myanmar as it is also a regular route used by militants of the North East. Besides, the Kaladan multi-modal Transit project has been hanging fire for nearly two decades. The Modi Government wants to see it through. Apart from trade and commerce, the Project is important in ensuring India's political and military interests in the region rivalling China. Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project intends to revive the river transport route up to Paletwa and build a 129-km-long two-lane highway (NH-502A) through the hilly terrains of Myanmar to connect NH-54 at Lawngtlai in Mizoram. This would reduce the distance from Kolkata to Aizwal by less than half from the existing 1,550 km. Such communications projects are integral for land-locked states like Mizoram.

### LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

### Speaker urged to remove non-member from MLA Hostel

The shoddy functioning of the MLA Hostel has caused considerable concern among MLAs, who in a recent letter have drawn the attention of the Speaker, Mr P G Marbaniang to it. The MLAs have urged removal of non-members from the Hostel rooms, and action against taxi drivers who have made the Hostel compound a "permanent parking place." The letter, signed by 14 MLAs, deplored the lack of security and the unchecked entry of outsiders to the Hostel premises, and suggested that security guards and watch-and-ward staff be provided immediately as a precautionary measure.

Non-members had occupied some Hostel rooms in contravention of the rules, the MLAs wrote, and demanded that this practice be put to an end to immediately. The members also said that the private vehicles of the MLAs could not be parked in the compound as some taxi drivers are using the places as a private car park.

Unauthorised vehicles should not be allowed inside the compound, they felt. The MLAs also demanded accommodation for their drivers, medical facilities, installation of generators, calling bells, and a twenty-four hour water supply.

The MLAs who signed the letter were Messrs B G Momin, C R Marak, C W Marak, B Rabha, S M Sangma, N B Sangma, M Agitok, L C Momin, H B Dan, L M Sangma, M Mukhim, B Nongseij, P D Sangma and C R Marak.

### Gold production up by 100 kgs

Gold production by the Bharat Gold Mines Limited (BGML) has gone up by about one hundred kg during the eleven months till February this year. The BGML produced 850.2 kgs gold from April 0988 to February this year as compared to 750 kg during the corresponding period in the previous year, steel and mines Minister Mr M L Fotedar told the Lok Sabha today.

# Is Congress running out of ideas?

By Patricia Mukhim

We are seeing a reactive Dr Mukul Sangma speak about a positive turnaround. But that's not the only thing! He has termed his arch rival the BJP as "jokers." That's a cruel remark to make against a political rival, no matter how loathsome they be. But that's what politics is reduced to in Meghalaya. It's a game of name-calling. And at this point in time the Congress seems to be on the back-foot hence it is only indulging in demagoguery and reacting to the beef ban issue which anyway is a state subject. When political parties start to react to what their rivals do it shows that they actually have nothing much to say about their own achievements.

But of course the CM was very particular about touting his government's success rate. He spoke of a positive turn-around repeatedly. One knows this because reporters generally record statements of VIPs and transcribe them verbatim. Editors know exactly how many times a particular word (turn-around) is repeated in the unedited report. The CM is fortunate that media here listen with respect and don't usually grill politicians the way some reputed television channels did to Lallu Yadav. Yes, media persons here are so docile that they did not deem it necessary to ask the CM to explain what that "positive turn-around" actually is and what sectors his government has managed to turn around. Is it the power sector, the agriculture sector, the employment generation sector, the education sector, the public health engineering or the public works department sectors? Or is he speaking about the tourism sector and the 30% subsidy on tourism infrastructure (home-stay facilities) – a scheme which has been taken advantage of by a few well established tour operators even while young entrepreneurs are still groping for funds?

Every demagogue needs an enemy. For the Congress and for Dr Mukul Sangma today the BJP is that enemy. But we are at the very first leg of the election campaign. People have not even shown their cards yet. The grapevine says some

of the leading Congressmen/ministers are likely to join the BJP. And while some of Dr Sangma's political rivals are right there and visible, such as PN Syiem, others are less obtrusive. They are waiting and watching the unfolding political scene and will jump ship by September this year. As far as PN Syiem is concerned, he already knows his political rival - a former bureaucrat – so he can start his campaign right away. It might not be such a tall order for Syiem to defeat a 'babu' who has for two decades or more only known how to talk down to people. How a supercilious bureaucrat can suddenly transform into a people-person rubbing shoulders with the hoi-polloi will be quite a spectacle. Maybe one can learn about behavioral change from the 2018 election. Of course Mawsynram will be an electoral fantasia with money changing hands like nobody's business. Both candidates will demonstrate their purchasing power even while the Election Commission will be left twiddling its thumbs, as is usually the case.

At the moment the Congress is a sinking ship. With Rahul Gandhi on a family vacation at a time when he should be lobbying for a consensus opposition presidential candidate, it's almost as if the Congress has given up its attempt to forge opposition unity. There are no formidable national campaigners for the Party at this juncture. Besides, the MUA government must suffer its share of anti-incumbency after having been in the driving seat for seven years and with no visible turn-around for the majority of Meghalaya's population. The Congress chief, as confided by his own party workers is very quick at clipping the wings of upcoming leaders. But hasn't that been the story of every political party? Hence any decent person wanting to contest elections will always have to think of entering a new party or contest as an

independent candidate. Quite a few rebels from the regional parties and the Congress, now seem to be wooing the National Peoples' Party (NPP) but with PA Sangma out of the scene, you wonder if the two younger Sangmas can rally the aggrieved candidates and consolidate the party's political base.

One only has to talk to people to find out that they are ready for a change. But what form that change will take and who will lead that change seems to be the million dollar question. The regional parties who we thought would all converge now look a bit under the weather. It's only the UDP and the HSPDP that have teamed up while KHNAM and the other newbies are out of the confederacy. So it is correct to expect that each constituency will have at least 5 candidates, one each from the Congress, BJP, PDF, NPP and the UDP-HSPDP. There might also be independents and the NCP too in some constituencies. So who will win in this multi-cornered contest is a tough prediction to make. So far the Congress has benefitted from such contests. But a lot depends on the candidates!

It will also be fun to watch how the BJP responds to the "joker" compliment of Dr Mukul Sangma. The Party thinks it is too early to bare its fangs. Incidentally, Dr Sangma has not launched a tirade against the regional parties, nor they at the Congress. Possibly both groups are looking at the numbers game and the possibility of forming a coalition government after February-March 2018. In that case Meghalaya is headed for another status quo and change is unlikely to make its appearance.

Dr Mukul Sangma while speaking to the media referred to his Government's non-acceptance of the business – as – usual attitude in addressing agitations from pressure groups. That is an aspect of his government that deserves commendation. The presence of the Meghalaya High Court which has prohibited the media from

publishing news of bandhs and hartals has also helped the cause. Quantifying the loss suffered by the state during the ILP agitation and filing an FIR against the different interest groups has succeeded in ushering in an atmosphere of relative harmony which in turn has allowed tourism to thrive. This is one plus point of the MUA-II government. But in terms of real development not much has been achieved. It is also a fact that Dr Sangma is running a cabinet that comprises ministers who have failed to deliver. The departments that have failed the people of this state the most are Power, Education, Health, Urban Affairs, PWD, PHED, C&RD and Agriculture. Dr Sangma's baby - The Basin Development Programme - which envisages a convergence of several departments has failed to achieve its objectives because departments have huge egos and want to function in silos. Some departmental heads complain that a large part of their budget is siphoned off to the Basin Project which has not yet been subjected to an external evaluation.

The Basin project is a new experiment and like every new venture it is bound to suffer hiccups but if there are visible gains from the project and people at the grass root are actually benefitting then I suppose the objective is achieved. But that can only happen if there is an independent evaluation team who will share their findings publicly. And seven years is enough time for any programme to make an impact!

It's time for Dr Sangma to speak about his government's achievements at a public forum where intelligent questions can be asked. The reason one asks for a public forum is because the answers trotted out in the Assembly are not incisive and lack coherence. They are attempts at obfuscation and the ruling party gets off lightly. Also, we have had enough of lectures. Now it's question time!

## Constitutional Authorities More corrupt than Politicians?

By Insaf

Has Goa stirred a hornet's nest? On Tuesday last, Chief Minister Parrikar proposed an audit of State electoral officers' reimbursement claim of Rs 16.86 crore incurred during the February poll. To Mr Clean, it was "seemingly exorbitant", as according to him, the officials had hired vehicles other than those already made available from various departments for election duty. While this would pass, his observation at a function two days later should ruffle feathers. He said that for those two-and-half-months of the poll process, the Election Commission has given this bill and 'they were going around in the vehicles'. And then there was a bigger punch at Nirvachan Sadan. He said: "I don't like to criticise constitutional authorities, but when constitutional authorities attain absolute power, they can become more corrupt than politicians." And, to buttress his point he stated that while politicians have to come before people every five years and are answerable to the media 24/7, "this kind of accountability has to be there everywhere."

The Chief Minister was obviously peeved at the delay in holding of elections in some panchayat wards after a court order and sought to know who should be held responsible for the delay? Sadly, to him "there is no accountability of the State Election Commission. If politicians were responsible for the delay, they would have been criticised. It is very easy to target a politician," he went on to make his point. The remarks would get a lot of cheer from the common man, but then two wrongs don't make a right. His run-in with the EC is not new. Last February, the poll body issued a notice to him (then Defence Minister) over his purported remarks suggesting bribery for votes during the election campaign. While he claimed his speech was wrongly translated, the Sadan had rejected it. With his latest utterances, has Parrikar put his foot in mouth or should he get kudos for speaking where others would fear to tread. The pow-wow is certainly worth a watch.

### Tripura State Demand

Tripura too seems to be heading towards trouble, like the Darjeeling Hills. With elections to the State due in February, the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT), on Wednesday last again raised its demand for a separate State. It has threatened to block NH 8, (connecting the land-locked State and the rest of India through Assam) and rail tracks indefinitely from 10th July. The CPM government of Manik Sarkar smells a rat and warned it will not tolerate a Manipur-like conspiracy. It claims that the BJP instigated the Naga group to block Manipur's National Highway to embarrass the ruling Congress and come to power. The plot was successful, and within days the BJP got the month long road blockade withdrawn! The IPFT however insists its demand is long-pending and the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAAD) area, which constitutes 2/3rd of the State's area and has a population of 37 lakhs be upgraded to a State. Though all parties are against it, all eyes would be on New Delhi. Will the BJP be able to extract its pound of flesh?

### Punjab Divergence

The ghost of Punjab militancy resurfaced bringing differences between alliance partners. On Wednesday last, when the Punjab Assembly had an obituary reference for "super cop" KPS Gill, all 14 MLAs of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) staged a walkout. But its partner, the BJP wasn't on the same page and three of its MLAs stayed put. SAD said 'Gill killed thousands of innocent youth and his name must be deleted from the list'. The BJP felt difference of opinion over the former DGP's style of functioning could be there, but there was no denying he brought peace to the State. Likewise, AAP MLAs refused to join their ally, the Lok Insaaf Party's two MLAs who too walked out shouting anti-Gill and government slogans. Understandably, the Congress Government justified its decision to pay tributes to Gill, and chose to remind SAD that Badal remained CM for 15 years "because of Gill." Would the allies at least agree on this? ---INFA

### TO THE EDITOR

### Freudian slip or intentional blip!

Editor, The protest rally by the East Garo Hills District Congress Committee against the Centre's notification on cow slaughter in Williamnagar, which appeared on Page 7 of your paper (ST, June 15, 2017) along with a photograph is a piece of laughing stock. The front banner in the rally, with the likes of local MLA Deborah Marak, Congress legislator Cherak Momin and Sengman Marak participating right behind, reads "We Condemn the NDA led BJP NPP Govt. who are against anti-people, anti-tribal and anti-farmers". What kind of a banner is this? The meaning that one gets from reading this banner is that the BJP- NPP led Govt. are pro-people, pro-tribal and pro-farmers because of the use of the word "against". Is it not something like the Congress party here in the state actually telling us the people that the Union Government led by the BJP NPP are not against the people, tribals

and farmers in this part of the country? This is a nice piece of publicity that the BJP, who are waiting to grab the throne of Meghalaya in the coming year, will take without any complaint. Is this banner an intentional blunder by the Congress party here, to indicate that many Congressmen and leaders are set to enter the BJP before the assembly elections, as claimed by the Meghalaya BJP President, Shibun Lyngdoh? After the decimation of the Congress party post 2014 and repeated slaughter of this grand old party in the state assembly elections, all over the country thereafter, it seems that the axe had fallen on the heads of the Congressmen that we are fed with such foolish banners to read. Whatever be the reason, the writing on the wall is clear.

Yours etc.,  
A Lyngdoh  
Shillong- 4

### Farmer's plight

Editor, It is indeed very sad to see that farmers in India have to commit suicide in

utter desperation every now and again. One fails to understand why the Govt. is not able to mitigate the plight of the farmers who form an important backbone of our economy and render the most important service to the society i.e feeding the people. It is quite baffling that at a time when we are spending billions of rupees on space exploration the Govt should find it difficult to remove the long standing penalty and suffering of our farmers.

Yours etc.,  
Sadiq Hussain Laskar,  
Viaemail

### What absurd ideas!

Editor, Apropos the letter of Omarlin Kyndiah (ST June 12, 2017) titled, "In 2018 CM should be from Jaintia Hills," it is learnt that the letter is a stinging criticism over HS Shylla's call for the next CM to be from Shillong. Kyndiah has called HS Shylla's proposal 'absurd.' If so, the statement is oxymoronic as it supports what it basically opposes. For the ordinary citizen it is immaterial from where and which party and

what ethnic back ground the Chief Minister or for that matter any minister comes from. What is needed is a representative who will serve the interest of the state and all its people. It is stupidity of the highest order to opine that the next CM should be expected to serve only his respective constituency. Only juveniles can give utterances to such outlandish immature understanding of our democracy. We are talking of elected representatives of the state not about petty local contractors of some small petty undertaking. Or are we? If a PhD holder carries such narrow thoughts then I pity the students he teaches. With the advent of the 2018 elections more and more absurd ideas are being touted by the so-called intelligentsia of Shillong.

Yours etc.,  
SN Lyngdoh,  
Shillong- 3

Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.

*“Part of the reason for the ugliness of adults, in a child's eyes, is that the child is usually looking upwards, and few faces are at their best when seen from below.”*

--- Alice Meynell

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 305

SHILLONG, SATURDAY, JUNE 17, 2017

### Modi's proposed US visit

THE most crucial event in the Narendra Modi's foreign policy will be his upcoming meeting with US President Donald Trump later this month. Although Trump has said that he will have good relations with foreign countries, that necessarily has to be selective with his focus being on America for Americans. Although a cloud has gathered over Indian job opportunities in India and the US, especially with the ban on the H-1B visas, the Indian government does not seem to be on an altogether sticky wicket. Of course, Delhi has to view the twists and turns in US foreign policy with apprehension. Trump has reset relations with NATO, pulled the US out of the Paris Climate Accord putting India in an unfavourable light, subverted the Trans-Pacific Partnership Trade Agreement and taken to social media to speak out on the trade deficit between Germany and the US. Modi has something in common with Trump - the personal touch. Both of them have a clear vision of national objectives overriding a global view. Modi will do well to put a new impetus in Indo-US relations when he meets Trump face to face. Modi can add a new chapter to predecessor Atal Behari Vajpayee's vision document.

Continuity in India-US relations with Trump taking over from Barack Obama is not possible. But there is continuity on one issue - the war on terrorism. Delhi may not go with Washington in condemning Tehran and eulogising Riyadh. But both are staunchly against the IS. Trump has already trotted out a tough line on Pakistan - sponsored terrorism. His analysts have spoken against the China - sponsored one belt, one road (OBOR). Modi must extract maximum mileage out of points of accord instead of focusing on the points of discord.

### LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

### Over-stretching state autonomy

The government of Assam has ordered a high-level inquiry by its Additional Chief Secretary into the recent Rajapukhuri carnage in Golaghat district claiming about 30 lives including women and children, about 150 injured and 200 houses burnt by invading Naga marauders. This is the third massacre of its kind in course of a decade on this inter-State border and this time perpetrated despite a neutral force of Assam Rifles and the CRP stationed in the area since the last occurrence in 1985 at Merapani. While the other two were specifically related to the perennial Assam-Nagaland border dispute along a vast territory interspersed with about a dozen Reserved Forests, initial reports in the present instance make it somewhat difficult to say whether it is the same old story of inter State boundary dispute or it has been a case of NSCN insurgency of which there are other signs too of a recent recrudescence.

The Assam Chief Minister has since lodged a strong protest with his counterpart in Nagaland against this armed Naga Attack and demanded that the culprits be handed over to the Assam Police for legal action. In another communication to the Prime Minister, Mr Mahanta has accused the Nagaland government and its official machinery of "direct or indirect connivance or complicity", with the massacre. This is too serious a charge for the Nagaland government to acknowledge without a counter-protest, and this in any case would rule out any cooperation on the part of Kohima to lend helping hand to the enquiry ordered by Dispur or even to the other, a magisterial one with quasi judicial powers, which is to follow. A Central initiative in the matter is very

much indicated in the circumstances, to find out the truth about the motivation of the carnage and Kohima's involvement in it, if any. It is strange that Dispur has opted to plough its own lonely furrow and not ask New Delhi to be associated with the enquiry.

On the question of a settlement of the Bodo issue too, Assam government continues to be allergic to central assistance in getting the ABSU activists to the negotiating table. The latter are obviously convinced about the futility of telling to the Assam Ministers any more, the earlier exercises having proved all too barren. They have lately been insisting on having a Central observer in such future talks and have laid down the same condition for the impending meeting which had been fixed through the mediation of some intermediaries. The State Home Minister, who was a party to these mediatory talks has since refused to accept this condition so that the prospect of negotiation is thus bleak indeed.

The AGP leadership suspects Cong(I) complicity in the Bodo stir, which is somewhat difficult to swallow. At most there could be some wishful thinking on the part of a section of the Congress(I) Opposition in the State to see that New Delhi is not available to grant the rulers at Dispur a convenient retrieve. This is all the more reason why Dispur should itself have taken the initiative to involve New Delhi in the Bodo talks to put the local Congress(I) leadership in the wrong.

Otherwise, too, a Bodo settlement cannot in any case be fashioned out and implemented without the Centre's express counsel and cooperation as in the cases of Punjab, Assam and Mizo Accords.

The US President gave a shock to the entire world, including India, by announcing exit from the Paris Climate Pact 2015. In the series of reversal of Obama administration's decisions, which were not consistent with his policies, Donald Trump has once more stepped on a subject that will have multiple consequences on international dealings in a variety of ways.

For one, Prime Minister Modi is expected to take up the issue with Trump on his visit to Washington on June 25. More so, as Trump accused New Delhi saying: "India makes its participation contingent on receiving billions and billions of dollars in foreign aid from developed countries", -- a gross exaggeration as the total foreign aid to India was said to be only \$3.1 billion in 2015 of which the share of the US was only \$100 million. India obviously is forced to respond as a victim to the normal human tendency to insult and humiliate aid receiver while maintaining cordial relations, notwithstanding Trump's decision following his election promise and was expected to come at any time.

He had promised to quit Paris Climate Agreement within 100 days of assuming office and to renegotiate for a fresh deal. By this announcement, Trump claims he is only fulfilling his "solemn duty to protect America and its citizens". The reasons given for this decision of immense global implications are meant to impress local audience and maintain a stance of over whelming preoccupation with American interests.

For the President, the Climate Pact was a bad economic deal that would put the US at a disadvantage against its international competitors. In detail, it would undermine the US economy, hamper American workers, and weaken US sovereignty - strong enough reasons for a national leader to safeguard his pre-eminent position if the fears are genuine.

The tragedy is that the world has reached a stage where immediate climate control has become unavoidable for the very

# Trump's Trump Card International climate game

By Dr S Saraswathi

survival of the planet. The greenhouse effect used to describe the increase in the earth's average temperature that has been recorded in the past 100 years was discovered by Joseph Fourier (1768-1830), a French physicist in 1824 and was first quantitatively investigated in 1896 by a Swedish scientist. It is the process by which the absorption and emission of infrared radiation by atmospheric gases warm a planet's lower atmosphere and surface. However, there are differences in assessing the strength of changes in greenhouse effects relative to human activities.

Continuous build-up of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases as a result of human activities and application of many machines has been conclusively proved. Accompanied with decrease in forest cover and green fields, it produces a combined effect in raising temperature and causing climate changes, according to scientists.

Global warming is one of the biggest threats to the world capable of causing immense damages to life. It can cause many changes like glacial retreat, Arctic shrinkage, sea level rise, flood and ultimate drying up of rivers, cyclones, and drastic climate changes.

The Paris Climate Accord (2015) arrived at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change set a goal of "well below 2 degrees C" for temperature rise and instituted a regime of financing of developing economies and provision of technical help to make the transition. The Pact was to go into effect by 2020. It is governed by voluntary pledges of nations. The principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities ensuring equity was incorporated in the Paris Agreement to enable developing countries to continue their development projects while implementing the Agreement.

Differential responsibility is a vital feature of the Pact which places heavier responsibility on

developed countries. The logic is that global warming and consequent climate change are caused by uncontrolled carbon emissions from their industrial, automobile and other sectors. Developing countries need some amount of freedom to carry on development schemes to catch up with others.

India ratified the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in October 2016. With this, 62 countries that were responsible for about 52 per cent of greenhouse gas emission had signed the Pact. It requires the signatories to submit a national inventory of gas emissions arising from human activity which would ensure transparency in the working of the Agreement. Such a clause also reduces scope for violations of the Pact.

The world's most powerful President played a victim's card in announcing the decision to quit claiming that the Paris Accord placed the US in disadvantageous position and more than that, placed India and China in the most advantageous situation. He openly lamented that the US had become a victim of global machinations. "The Paris Accord is very unfair at the highest level to the United States", he stated.

Trump calculated that job loss to his country by adhering to emission norms prescribed in the Pact would go up to 2.7 million by 2025. His grievance is that the limits prescribed by the Pact allow India to double its coal production whereas USA has to stop it. He overlooks or rather repudiates the principle of differential restrictions for developed and developing countries so that countries like India are not prevented from making industrial progress. International pacts in the age of globalisation are not and cannot be meant to preserve inequalities and keep the developing nations for ever developing behind the developed.

There are three main agencies in the US government concerned with fighting global warming - the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Energy, and the Department of Interior. All the three have

either denied or expressed disbelief in the scientific opinion that human activity is causing global warming.

If action follows immediately after Trump's announcement, the Clean Power Plan of the Environmental Protection Agency of the US, which requires States to lower carbon emissions from electricity sector, may be dropped. Fuel economy regulations for cars and trucks, clean energy tax incentives and research spending may also get reduced.

The future of Green Climate Fund based in South Korea may become uncertain as it was created to provide funds for technological innovations to fight climate change in developing countries. So also the Loss and Damage Mechanism through which rich nations could pay compensation to developing countries in case of climate-induced natural disasters may get weakened.

America's exit will lessen the vigor and enthusiasm of other countries in adhering to Paris Pact and would also nullify the effects of their actions. However, a saving factor will be the freedom of individual States in the US to pursue their policy of reducing greenhouse effects. It is reported that California and New York are keen to continue cutting greenhouse emissions by 40 per cent below 1990 level by the year 2030. Many States are levying a price on carbon emissions. A number of multinational US

companies are in favour of honouring the Paris Pact. Ultimately, it seems to be a matter of belief in scientific warnings on global warming. The trump card put down by the US in the international climate game is not likely to lead to victory for anybody. For, climate change is a global reality that will affect both signatories and non-signatories of the Paris Pact. It does not distinguish between the rich and the poor, the developed and developing, or the donor and the recipient. --INFA

(The author is former director, ICSSR, New Delhi)

### TO THE EDITOR

### GST a caste-based tax?

Editor,  
While sacred thread is a symbol of caste division, Braille paper/typewriter is a symbol of hope for the blind. Ironically, GST has proposed 0 per cent levy on sacred thread but 12 per cent levy on Braille paper and 18 per cent on Braille typewriter that until now have been fully exempt from all taxes and duties. Moreover, while khada, pancharmit, vibhuti are in zero per cent taxation category, hearing aids have been taken out from the exempted category and put in the box of 12 per cent levy. Is GST in favour of caste and disability divide?

Yours etc.,  
Madhu Agrawal,  
Delhi - 6

### Corruption in constitutional bodies?

Editor,  
Goa Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar has rightly raised a very valid point about possibilities of corruption in constitutional bodies which are practically out of bounds from normal scrutiny. His direct reference was towards hefty conveyance-bill of rupees 16.86 crores sent by State Election Office despite state-government having provided sufficient number of vehicles for poll-duty

during elections to state-assemblies held in February 2017. Absolute power results in absolute corruption. In case presently there does not exist any system for audit of expenses in constitutional bodies, then a system must be formulated to audit all such bodies where there is usually high level of corruption at least on expenses-side. There should be adequate and proper checks and balances for constitutional bodies which have huge budgets and employees requiring a proper check against corruption.

Yours etc.,  
Madhu Agrawal,  
Delhi - 6

### Resurgence of HNLC

Editor,  
News reports that the banned outfit HNLC through its enigmatic publicity secretary Sainkumar Nongtraw has been issuing releases to the media about the outfit's action plans vis-à-vis the Khasi Students' Union's (KSU's) opposition to the railhead at Byrnihat, indicate that the two organisations are working in tandem. It is no secret that it was the radical KSU activists who first joined the HNLC in the early 1990's. A couple of years ago another KSU activist

declared that he would join the HNLC and did so, but has since surrendered. The HNLC cadres who have surrendered have done so out of a complete sense of disillusionment. Having joined the outfit, they find that the only objective of the HNLC is extortion since the senior members are well adjusted in Bangladesh either owning betel nut orchards or doing some other business. The new cadres who join must find a way to earn money for their own upkeep. Militancy is a dwindling activity especially at a time when the Central Government has laid down strict directives that there will be no more talks with any gun-toting outfit henceforth, unless they surrender completely with their arms and ammunition.

Earlier, under the Congress regime at the Centre, militancy grew by leaps and bounds. When one group would come to the talks table, some cadres would breakaway and create their own groups. It was a losing battle and not the best way to tackle militancy. The surrenderees holed up in camps were fed and looked after. They were not gainfully employed. Every time they would make a noise that government was not paying them the amount promised for their upkeep. How can the taxpayers' money be used to feed these idle blokes?

The HNLC too it seems wants a similar treatment

where, after the talks they would get easy money on which to live the rest of their idle lives. Sorry but that is not the way to tackle goondaism which is what all these armed outfits are indulging in. Merely because they trot out some obscure ideology does not mean a thing. Every one of them is trying to mimic the NSCN without understanding the harrowing experiences that the Naga armed outfits have been through in their over 50 year struggle.

One is amazed that the police are unable to crack down on the email identity of Sainkumar Nongtraw. Also the repeated acts of arson happening in the city suggest that police intelligence is at an all time low. If such incidents cannot be prevented within the city of Shillong and selected targets in heavily populated localities are attacked again and again then it means that the public cannot be sure of their lives and properties; in other words their fundamental rights! As it is law and order has always been a slippery subject in Meghalaya. Is the Government listening? Can citizens sleep peacefully when petrol bombs can be hurled at their properties any time of the night?

Yours etc.,  
JN Syiem,  
Via email

## POLITICAL DELICACIES

By Rahul Nora Chopra

### FOR PERFECT 'UNDERSTANDING' AMONG OPPOSITION PARTIES

Whether the united opposition bid to have its own candidate for the forthcoming presidential election will succeed, or more importantly whether their candidate, if at all there is one, will achieve anything other than ensuring that the election does not go uncontested, depends not on the opposition parties, but the NDA, more specifically the BJP. But one thing is for sure: the opposition parties are going out of their way, virtually so, to ensure that there is perfect understanding among them, if not on fielding a common candidate, but at least in terms of what each party wants to tell every other party. In a break from the past, the representatives of every party that attended

apparent move for a consensus candidate, even if that is the real intention, is sure to further confound the confusion prevailing in the opposition camp. BJP also announced meetings with CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechuri, who seems to be convinced that the ruling party is laying a trap for the opposition by launching these consultations, although he is not sure about the kind of trap.

### AHLUWALIA ON BJP'S V-C PROBABILITY LIST

According to Sources, Lok Sabha MP Surendrajee Singh Ahluwalia's name has been figuring in the BJP list for vice president nominees. The party think-tank is said to be keen on his candidature as it thinks it will help consolidate the Punjabi and Sikh votes in its favour, which could help it capture power in the Delhi assembly elections. The

**The joint opposition parties are understood to be zeroing on Vice President Hamid Ansari as a consensus candidate for the presidential poll, but their biggest worry would be whether Ansari would like to oblige them by agreeing to be their nominee. According to all available indications, no candidates whose names are in consideration want to contest the election. But the most acceptable name for all continues to be that of the incumbent Vice President.**

Wednesday opposition meeting spoke in English for the benefit of the representatives of DMK, which is sworn to oppose the imposition of Hindi on Tamilians, although most of them can pick up a language faster than many others because they are such compulsive communicators!

Those who specially cared about the language etiquette surprisingly included RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav, who is of late discovering the power of silence, especially at a time when another day does not pass without Sushil Kumar Modi, the BJP leader in his state, revealing one more alleged benami transaction gratifying the Lalu clan, Lalu himself directly or his kin, mainly sons and daughters. Lalu kept the sobriety of the situation and spoke in English, although his speech was only a part-sentence long: "No ideological compromise", declared the RJD supremo, who is now keeping an uncharacteristic silence to Modi's allegations, which must be giving senior ruling coalition partner Nitish Kumar the delight of his life in Patna.

The joint opposition parties are understood to be zeroing on Vice President Hamid Ansari as a consensus candidate for the presidential poll, but their biggest worry would be whether Ansari would like to oblige them by agreeing to be their nominee. According to all available indications, no candidates whose names are in consideration want to contest the election. But the most acceptable name for all continues to be that of the incumbent Vice President.

Meanwhile, a deft move by the BJP caused further confusion in the opposition camp as the party leadership announced a scheduled meeting with Congress president Sonia Gandhi and others to discuss the possibility of finding a consensus candidate. Although the NDA seems to have already organized the numbers to ensure the victory of its nominee, the

BJP wants the assembly elections to be held in December this year or in January 2018. The strategy fits in with the party's ambitions for the next Lok Sabha elections as well.

### HEPTULLA'S APPOINTMENT SETTLES NOMINATION SPECULATION

The appointment of Manipur Governor and former Minority Affairs minister Najma Heptulla as the Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia settles the issue on her candidature for the vice presidential poll. At one point of time, she seemed to have been one of the BJP favourites, but later on party circles had indicated little possibilities for that happening. Now that she has been appointed to the new position, the issue remains closed as far as Najma is concerned. 77-year-old Najma succeeds Lt Gen (Retd) MA Zaki, who just completed his five-year term this month. Najma, who has been a five-time member of the Rajya Sabha and its deputy chairman for 16 years, served as the Minister of Minority Affairs in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Cabinet before being appointed as the governor of Manipur.

### CONG MINORITY DEPARTMENT TO HAVE WIDER REPRESENTATION

The Congress party wants to reconstitute the minority department so every section gets a fair representation in it. Accordingly, there will be one Chairman and four vice chairmen in the minority department. Muslim, Sikh, Jain, Christian and Buddhist sections are expected to get proper representation in the panel. Rahul Gandhi is learnt to have asked the state leaders to give him five names from the each state to be considered for appointment as chairman and vice chairmen. Those lobbying to head the setup apparently include Rashid Alvi, Meem Afzal, Zafar Ali Naqvi, Imran Kidwai and Dr. Shakeel-u-Zaman Ansari. (IPA)

# The reality of globalisation

**Yoga reflects exchange of ideas that shapes cultures across world. Jaime Dunaway & Emma Beyer from the US & Liza Gomes from India report ahead of World Yoga Day on June 21**

**T**raditional Indian music fills a two-room yoga studio. Dozens of coloured mats rest on the floor, facing a shrine. On the wall is a framed picture of Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, the father of modern yoga, near a statue of the Hindu god Ganesha.

In US's Midwestern town of Columbia, Missouri, the teacher at AlleyCat Yoga calls out positions — tree pose, child pose, warrior pose — as students bend their bodies in rhythmic motions to quiet their frazzled minds. Class ends with a final unison, "Namaste."

More than 8,000 miles away, a handful of men and women roll out mats inside the Mystic Yoga Cafe in Kolkata. Here, the room resembles a dance studio, with simple decor and full-length mirrors covering the front wall. There is no music, no special chanting. Stifling temperatures above 100 degrees don't deter participants, who attend mostly for fitness or weight loss.

These disparate scenes may be the opposite of what many expect. While yogis in the US are increasingly reconnecting with yoga's spiritual roots, many in India are influenced by America's commercialised approach to the practice and are becoming more consumer-focused themselves. Yoga reflects a reality of globalisation — the exchange of ideas that shapes cultures across our connected world, now more than ever.

Such exchanges help drive a booming yoga industry. More than 36 million US practitioners spent \$2.5 billion on yoga classes in 2016, according to the Yoga in America Study conducted by Yoga Journal and Yoga Alliance. In the St Louis metro area alone, there are nearly 50 yoga studios offering classes of all kinds. In India, the number of yoga practitioners soared 30 per cent last year, prompting a 35 per cent increase in demand for yoga trainers catering to Westernised natives and international tourists, according to the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India.

## East meets West

The historical origins of yoga are steeped in ancient Indian philosophy designed to cultivate greater self-awareness, higher levels of consciousness and inner peace.

Yoga gained popularity in America in the 1960s, when the Beatles used traditional Indian instruments on their album "Help!" stoking interest in Eastern culture among Westerners.

Over the next several decades, yoga spread across the US, gaining an American flavour along the way. By the 1980s and '90s, the practice was more consumer-focused than traditional Indian yoga. Americans increasingly used it as an exercise to stay healthy and active, according to the Yoga in America Study.

In 2016, the study reported that Americans spent \$16 billion on yoga classes, clothing and accessories. Businesses profited from consumers' interest in yoga



(Left) Melinda Oliver of St Louis, US, practises yoga at Lake Stephens Park in Columbia. She teaches community classes in Columbia, Missouri, and has begun a yoga programme for girls in the ninth grade to promote self-awareness, self-esteem and mental health; Sudeshna Sen, a 24-year-old student of St Xavier's College practises yoga in front of the Victoria Memorial in Kolkata. Sen has been practising yoga for three years; and a group of men and women strikes yoga poses while being led during a class at Mystic Yoga Cafe in Kolkata

— perhaps none more so than yoga retail giant Lululemon, which charges up to \$128 for a pair of yoga pants.

Some yoga instructors say this consumerism can be a good thing.

"Do I like looking cute in my yoga pants? You bet. Do we capitalise on that? Yes, we live in America," said Kathy Kessler, a yoga teacher at Halcyon Spa & Salon in Augusta. "But because it's become commercialised, so many people were exposed to it that weren't before."

"If someone comes to the mat, they're going to evolve and understand the therapeutic benefits of it."

## Yearning for meaning

Yet many US yoga practitioners are looking to the past to recapture that centuries-old spirituality at the core of the practice.

"One huge aspect of yoga is breathing and meditating, and I do that as much as possible throughout my week," said University of Missouri senior Lucille Sherman, who has been practicing yoga since childhood. "Yoga helps me center myself. I'm a better person when I practice. It reminds me to sit still and take in life as it is, just for a moment."

Types of yoga that reconnect Americans with the deeper side of practice are gaining momentum. These include Kundalini, which blends physical and spiritual practices like dynamic breathing and mantra chanting to awaken the conscious. Kessler offers Kundalini, as well as gong healing and other more spiritual classes.

"(Kundalini) is much more spiritual than what has happened to yoga as it's been mainstreamed," said Siri Atma Kaur, a Kundalini teacher at Urban Breath Yoga in St Louis. "It's 16 times as powerful as other forms of yoga in getting into upper states of consciousness and achieving balance. The formulas are so powerful, you radiate. You look different."

Instead of trendy yoga pants embellished with bright colors and bold patterns, Kaur said Kundalini practitioners

opt for plain white clothing made of cotton, wool or silk to "brighten their aura" and prevent static electricity from altering their personal electric charges. The attire is topped with a headscarf to keep the Kundalini energy, awakened during yoga, from escaping through the top of the head.

Thanks to pop star practitioners like Katy Perry's ex-husband, Russell Brand, Kundalini communities are active on the US coasts. Recruiting members in St

Louis is tougher, but any American looking to reconnect with yoga's traditional roots can find several tools in Kundalini practice, Kaur said.

One such tool is the ringing of the disharmonious gong, which helps students reset and balance their minds. Another is the Japji, or the Song of the Soul recited by the ancient sikhs that allows yogis to explore the depths of their souls.

The poses themselves are tools to explore the inner self.

"You can just do the yoga, but most of the time, people catch Kundalini, and they want to go all the way because it makes such a difference," Kaur said. "It's not a religion, but a lifestyle, a technology, a sacred science."

## West meets East

While spirituality takes hold in the US, India's yoga scene is shifting to accommodate American consumer needs.

More stressed-out Americans are travelling to India on yoga retreats, helping the Asian giant become one of the fastest growing wellness tourism destinations in the booming \$439 billion worldwide industry, according to the Global Wellness Institute.

Missouri resident Dustin Thomas, who suffers from a connective tissue disorder called Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, made the pilgrimage to Pune, India, for rest, relaxation and a chance to learn how to become a yoga trainer at his business, Yoga Studio 72, in Springfield.

"I live basically pain free now," Thomas said. "Yoga is the only thing I've found that can manage the pain or get rid of it."

The Indian government is capitalising on yoga's popularity by supporting global events like the United Nation's International Day of Yoga that make the practice even more susceptible to global and commercial forces. Such events boost India's international profile and help the country export other parts of its culture, such as films, food and fashion.

"I am in touch with a friend in France, and I must say, she does yoga way better than any Indian trainer," said 40-year-old Gaurav Pandey, who attends classes at Mystic Yoga Cafe. "I practice yoga as it is a great way to keep myself healthy and fit without using any equipment. It is more of an exercise for me."

But not everyone is happy with yoga's changing profile in India. Pandering to commercial interests has caused tension among traditional yoga teachers, who believe globalisation has inadvertently corrupted yoga's original purpose.

"Indians have more knowledge about yoga as it originated in India, so it is our duty to see that yoga is practiced in its purest form," said Sudhir Maheshwari, a yoga trainer at Mystic Yoga Cafe in the eastern city of Kolkata. "In India, the practice of yoga must be kept traditional. Once the Western influences creep in, the original form of yoga is not practiced in its sacred form."

Though globalisation has produced profound changes in yoga, some practitioners say its spiritual essence is its greatest gift to the world — and the reason it's spreading, as Maheshwari said, "like wildfire". "I feel if anything is mystical, it will be practiced and adopted by people," the trainer said. "When people feel and see the change, they will automatically adopt it." (IBNS-TWTF)

(Images by Avishek Mitra in India and Emma Beyer in USA)

## By Konkona Choudhury

**T**he wings of yoga around the globe. The word "Yoga" is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Yuj', which means to join or unite. The union referred to is the integration of body and mind to create a greater connection with our inner self.

Yoga originated in India and dates back to 4,500 BC. Yoga is considered one of the six branches of classical philosophy and is referred to throughout the Vedas. It is in the Vedas, and later, the Bhagavad Gita, where yoga was praised as an important spiritual element. However, the first "yoga manual" was not written until 200 BC — "the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali". It is composed of 196 aphorisms or sutras which describe the eight-fold paths, or "eight limbs" (ashta-eight, anga-limb). The following describes the eightfold paths:

**Yama**, which means social restraints or ethical values;  
**Niyama**, which is personal observance of purity, tolerance, and study;  
**Asanas** or physical exercises;  
**Pranayama**, which means breath control or regulation;  
**Pratyahara** or sense withdrawal in preparation for meditation;  
**Dharana**, which is about concentration;  
**Dhyana**, which means Meditation; and  
**Samadhi**, which means ecstasy.

These eight steps act as guidelines on how to live a meaningful and purposeful life. They serve as a prescription for moral and ethical conduct and self-discipline; they direct attention towards one's health; and they help us to acknowledge the spiritual aspects of our nature.

In India in the late 20th century and early 21st century the most influential people to make yoga a word of mouth in every house was Swami Ramdev of Patanjali Yogapeeth (Divyayoga Trust) and Sri Sri Ravishankar of the Art of Living commu-

nity. Swami Ramdev is known for his efforts in popularising Yoga in every parts of the country and also for providing Ayurvedic treatments to the ailed.

My practice of yoga dates back to 2006. I was introduced to yoga in the college as a compulsory activity. I found it very refreshing and gradually it enlightened me when I could connect to my body and mind. I had then picked up the traditional surya namaskar (sun salutations comprise 12 distinguished postures) which is a great physical activity and as you deepen into the postures the most important thing is to link the body movement with breath.

Once the body gets used to with the physical movement, we could tame the breath. I also had had long practice sessions of pranayamas (Prana-life force, or vital energy, particularly, the breath, and ayama-to extend or draw out).

I had always liked to practise yoga in a group as that always motivated me to linger on. When I was in Denmark I had found out about the Bikram Yoga and there were many attendees in those classes. As I was in Canada, I was initially suffering from a jet lag and had trouble getting sleep at night for many weeks. I had started practising pranayama at home.

However, I was keen on finding a group yoga class. To my utter surprise within a span of 1 km radius of my house, there were some five yoga centres. Now this was something I never expected and honestly I had not found so many studios around one place even in India. Immediately, I joined one of the studios.

When I joined the class, I was surprised to see a huge idol of Lord Ganesha. As I began the classes I realised that there were various forms of yoga taught in the studio:

**Yin Yang**: In Indian and Chinese philosophy, the concept of yin yang means "dark and light". This is a light yoga and the concentration is on long holding of a posture which enables the opening of muscles. Yin yoga involves mostly sitting or



## Wings of Yoga



lying postures for promoting growth, clearing energetic blockages, and enhancing circulation. On the other hand in Yang yoga it involves standing or more strenuous postures for developing core strength and muscle tone, balance, and stamina.

**Yoga Flow**: In yoga flow, we are invited to explore and experience greater depth, ease and flow of movement through the whole body in a sequence of yoga 'asanas'. The sun salutations (surya namaskar) are a part of the flow yoga. The yoga postures can be anything from the seated lotus pose (padma asana) or the intense half moon (Artha Chandra asana) or boat pose (Pari purna Nava asana). There is a sequence of postures from standing to

sitting to lying down.

**Saatva**: This class is designed to bring balance, inner strength and energise the practitioner. A diverse sequence of Hatha postures that flow together allow us to reveal the potential that exists within the balanced, open body. After the postures pranayama is practised where there are several breathing techniques to strengthen the lungs and centre the mind, followed by a meditation. Combining these three elements of yoga practice, (body, breath and mind) leaves the body and mind completely blissful!

**Ashtanga**: As discussed earlier about the ashtanga yoga comprises of the eight-fold path of yoga practice (ashta-eight

Anga-limbs). The breathing style used in Ashtanga Yoga is Ujjayi which is a relaxed diaphragmatic style of breathing (breathing which first fills the lower belly, rises to the lower rib cage and finally moves into the upper chest and throat), characterised by an ocean sound which resonates in the practitioner's throat.

Throughout a practice, this specific breathing style is maintained in alignment with movements. The steady cycle of inhaled and exhaled provides the practitioner with a calming, mental focal point. The Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga is different from many yoga classes in the west in that the order of asanas is completely predefined. A practice will comprise four main parts: an "opening sequence", one of the six main "series", a back-bending sequence, and a set of inverted asanas, referred to as the "happy ending" or "finishing sequence". Practice always ends with savasana.

**Hot Yoga**: This session is performed in a heated room of 35 to 40 degree centigrade. The heat in the room detoxifies and relaxes the body, allowing for a deep, safe and gentle practice that leaves the person physically and mentally balanced and also helps to reduce the excess weight in the body faster. The stretches performed in the heat are designed to target the deep connective tissues, increase flexibility and open the meridians of the body.

Every yoga practice closes with, a deep relaxing posture or corpse posture (sawanasna) to relax at the end of the yoga practice and a greeting of "Namaste" to everyone for honouring the practice.

Every asana is held for a defined number of breaths. In effect, attention is placed on the breath and the journey between the asanas rather than solely on achieving perfect body alignment in an asana.

In the last few paragraphs we had been discussing on the yoga technique fol-

lowed in the western countries. However, on a different angle it is noteworthy that yoga has spread its wings in every nook and corner of the world and the roots of that yoga lie in India — in Hinduism and Buddhism. Moreover, the benefits of yoga are not hidden from anyone. Every asanas and the breathing (prana yamas) has its affect on a body part be it back body, lower body, hips, calves, groin, ankle, shoulder, belly, thighs, arms, feet, the largest organ skin. Not to forget the various inner organs like thyroid, kidney, liver and most important our life line organ the heart.

The concept of yoga is to breathe from the heart, fill the whole body with the breath and release all the toxins via our skin in the form of sweat.

People have become very much health conscious and are concerned on the various aspects to stay healthy and fit. The people of India have gradually owned yoga-some in order to connect to their inner soul while others for fitness.

On the other aspect, the market is also provoking people to own some or the other fitness regime. It is amazing to see, the various forms of "Yoga Mats" being sold in different types of shops be it malls or in the road side shops in India. In the western world there are specific stores for only Yoga clothes which are quite expensive. However, people would be conscious in buying specific yoga clothes from there. It could be pure marketing gimmicks but for me the fact lies on the awareness on yoga where people are ready to pay any amount for the clothes or yoga studios.

Nevertheless, what makes more sense to me is to see that yoga has spread its wings in every nook and corner of the globe. This brings a ray of hope to see a fit and healthy world in the form of a yogi or yogini.

(The author was in Calgary, Canada, and was a regular student of Yoga)

# Imitation of reel life

You know that movie where someone jumps out of a building and lands safely on a passing truck? I think it was called Pretty Much Every Movie Ever.

Well, a reader sent me a link to that exact clip — only it was a real-life news report. A building in Hebei, in the north of China, was ablaze and several people jumped out of high windows on to a truck filled with vegetables, escaping completely unharmed.

Makes you think, right? Next time you've finished work and the lifts going down are full, check the passing traffic. Perhaps the Uber people could provide options. "I'd like to order a truck of vegetables outside my building at 5.30, please." "Certainly, sir, cabbage or lettuce?"

noyed girlfriend turned up at his wedding with a gun and took him away. Police thought it was so movie-like that it must have been staged.

I would agree, except for one crucial thing: The incident happened at an Indian wedding, which is famous as vortexes in which anything can happen.

Example: At a recent wedding in Uttar Pradesh, the bride refused to marry the groom after discovering that he'd provided a meat-free banquet. She instead married a man from among the wedding guests.

Reports of brides marrying wedding guests are not uncommon in India, and it puzzles me that any single men dare to attend such ceremonies.

Several times a year, young men must come home and have the following conversation. Mom: "How was your roommate's wedding?" Son: "The usual. By the way, meet my wife, Aditi."

A fourth news report in this category arrived that night. Two people in the US state of Washington discovered that they were born on the same day of the same month of the same year in the same town — and eventually learned they were twins. Yes, it's the exact plot of the hit movie 'The Parent Trap'. But that's about two young girls.

## THE FUNNY SIDE Nury Vittachi

This correspondent has noticed that "life-is-a-movie" items usually appear in batches, as if Destiny decides to recycle old film storylines for a while.

The same day a reader sent me a link to another news video of real life imitating art: A beaver was seen guiding a herd of 150 cows in Canada. Perhaps the beaver had actually seen the movie Babe, about a pig doing the work of a sheepdog, and wanted to try it himself. Beavers are smaller than pigs and cows are bigger than sheep, so real life beats the movie.

A third example arrived a day later. A man broke up with his girlfriend and went off to marry someone else. The an-

In the real life version, a man and a woman found they were twins after they got married. The scientific term for this is 'awkward'. No doubt they are taking classes in Sibling Rivalry and Cutting Remarks so they can be 'normal'.

If Destiny is reading this, can I put in a request for the movie 'Almost Famous' to come true? In that film, the beautiful Kate Hudson falls in love with a not-very-good, not-very-famous journalist.

Real-life Kate, whoever you are, I'm here.

*(Nury Vittachi is an Asia-based frequent traveller. Send ideas and comments via his Facebook page)*

# Manas: Call of the wild

I am from the busy metropolis of Kolkata, a jungle of concrete. My service posting to Guwahati opened up a new world of lush green vegetation inhabited by rhinoceros, elephants, buffalos and tigers. Exotic animals and an exotic new world beckoned me. I was not alone in my experience. My wife shares my wanderlust and together we started visiting different parks, sanctuaries and forests of Assam.

The first in the series was Kaziranga. Assam tourism treated us as royals and introduced us to this wonderful world of the rhinoceros, and we were smitten. It was love at first sight. The jungle and the natives together weaved a magic carpet ride and we felt like Aladdin and Jasmine of the fabled Arabian Nights.

Pobitora is near Guwahati and we don't miss any opportunity to be there. Next in the series came Nameri with its night in a tent and a trek through the forest.

Last week I had four days' holiday for Rongali Bihu. It was also Poila Baishak, the Bengali New Year. We decided to celebrate it by making a trip to Manas National Park. While travelling to Kolkata from Guwahati, along with my wife, by road on my bike in the October of 2015, I saw the highway telling me the direction to Manas. Then we couldn't visit. But the plan to visit was planted in my head and the seed planted then bore fruits during the recent holidays.

I was looking for a place to stay near Manas. I checked Trip Advisor but didn't get a hotel or lodge to serve my purpose. Either rooms were not available or the rooms proved to be beyond my budget. I wanted a hotel within 20 km radius of the park. I came across a site (<http://assamtourism.gov.in/accommodation/lodges.html>) of government of Assam listing all the phone numbers and addresses of government tourist lodges in Assam. I called up the number of the lodge near Manas. A lady received the call. She was the tourist officer. She said that she was out of Assam but that she could help me with the booking of a room in the government tourist lodge.

She shared with me the number of Subha Das, the person entrusted with the responsibility of looking after the lodge. The Lodge was in Barpeta Road.

On April 14 we embarked on



## TRAVELLER'S DIARY

our journey. We travelled by our Ford Figo (subcompact hatchback). I drove. The car AC helped in fighting the sunrays but didn't take away the anxiety in our hearts. I have only 6,000 km of driving experience. This highway trip is the furthest I have travelled by driving a car. Guided by Google map we reached the lodge. Das

was not present. In his place we were received by Jaiful Islam. He was the cook, and he did justice to his name. The room given to us was huge and sparkling clean. We were relieved. It was Assam type and has a distinct old world charm to it.

We took rest for one hour and then drove to the park to enquire

and to make reservations about the next day's visit. Google map showed a nonexistent road over the railway lines and we got caught in a maze. My navigator as always showed me a way out of the maze of the map and we were on the road to the park. The road was not a road but a collection of gravel, dust and pot holes of all shapes and

sizes. We negotiated the pothole riddled 20 kms to the main entrance of the park from Barpeta Road. My small car handled the big task with grace; and we reached the forest range office at 3 pm. There we met Pintu Sarkar. He was the person to be contacted for arranging a safari. A one hour duration elephant ride would cost you Rs 875 per head and a jeep safari for half day will come for Rs 2,000.

We were informed about another road connecting the park to the national park. The tarmac in that road is smooth and shiny and it enters through Bhawanipur. From Bhawanipur through Sorupeta and Salbari to the main entrance of the park is 33 kms of roads.

The forest guard at the main gate told us we can enter the park and drive to Mathanguri located 20 km from the main gate at the Indo-Bhutan border at the bank of the Manas river. For the car we need to pay Rs 300 and Rs 100 more per head. The time allowed was 6 am to 3 pm. We agreed readily. We decided to enter the park next morning and drive to Mathanguri. Just beside the main entrance there is a resort named Bansbari Lodge. A night there would cost you Rs 2,400 for non AC double bedroom. The reception at the resort was tastefully decorated.

We reached the lodge at 6 pm. We were tired. All we wanted to do was to retire for a good night sleep. I met Das and he also told me about a better road through Bhawanipur. I informed him that I would check-out early next morning.

At 5 am I woke up my wife and we got ready by 6 am after having wonderfully invigorating tea. Islam gave us the bills. I paid him and thanked him for the hospitality. Then driving through the sleeping town we hit the highway to Manas. I expected torrential rain but it only drizzled and then the wind blew away the clouds. As we reached the gates of Manas, the sun peeped through the clouds. I paid the fees and we got our entry pass; and we drove into Manas National Park. I felt great because I have experienced a jeep safari, an elephant ride and even a trek on foot but never have I driven into a National Park in a four wheeler.

*(To be continued)  
(Contributed by Saptarshi Majumder)*

## 'Star - Gazing'

By Pt. Ajai Bhambi

Sunday, June 18, 2017

Moon square Mars on your solar return chart indicates a mixed year. You continue to move away from false paths that no longer serve you well, or you transform them into more suitable ones. This year, you're likely to get things moving smoothly, even if you are still rather independent and at times rebellious. As you become more accustomed to the energy of the Universe, you are more active than reactive. The plus side of this influence is that you feel fresher, more energetic, younger, and more expressive. The need for freedom in your social relationships is strong, however, and if it is not forthcoming, you could feel caged in and restless.

**Aries: (March 21 - April 20)**

This promises to be a busy, dynamic, and significant phase. There would be a turning point in your professional life and you are also in terms of personal growth. Your emotions run high and mood swings are possible. There may be some kind of conflict in your life arising from a great urge to do something different. You need space and contact with others in order to feel content. Financial benefits may come on your way. You would impress people with your style and win their confidence and trust. You are blessed with intuition and foresight which lead you in the right direction. You are relaxed within and relate well with others at home and work.

**Taurus: (April 21 - May 21)**

The planetary influence indicates favorable outcomes when it comes to legal affairs, education, and travel. You are more accepting and understanding your friends and lovers. Contentedness in love is likely to figure and to attract positive circumstances and people into your life. You are bound to enjoy increased social opportunities as well as a boost in your personal popularity and magnetism. You would think more creatively and express yourself with more sensitivity, compassion, and warmth. You may have a desire to redecorate your office or a place of work and bring in small yet significant changes. This is an excellent time under which you bring more harmony and pleasant interactions to your relationships.

**Gemini: (May 22 - June 21)**

You would have an optimistic, but not necessarily realistic, attitude. You may feel a vague restlessness and discontentment with life as it is, although you are generally in a happy mood. Excellent work opportunities emerge for those working with overseas connections. At home, you accept the individuality of your spouse and that would be helpful to resolve your conflicts and move ahead in harmony. At times you feel fun loving, energetic, and willing to explore new ideas. Financial benefits may come on your way. Stress may crop up at unexpected turns and this would require you to look at some lifestyle changes and even incorporate some techniques like exercise and meditation.

**Cancer: (June 22 - July 22)**

People in authority regard you favorably and events take place in which you feel like you are moving forward and growing into a new phase of your life. You will be making contact through learning, communicating and mental pursuits. This indicates an intellectually stimulating time in which the exchange of ideas with others figures prominently. You would expand your social circle and make more contact with groups and friends. Health will take a turn for the betterment and you inculcate a new diet or exercise regimen. You display great skills in sports, competitive exams, physical activities and this wins appreciation and brings up new opportunities for professionals in this field.

**Leo: (July 23 - August 23)**

You are likely to form new relationships or connections that further your financial growth. This phase brings socializing, romance and stability at work place. It's time to make a lifestyle change. Any unresolved argument may create rifts in your relationships, take a softer approach in your interactions when comes to family related matters. Your actions and emotions are balanced as you bring more accuracy in your work area. Economy at home and management of business and work are important issues. Personal relations are satisfying and you have plenty of goodwill and friendships around you. You are likely to get back to fitness routines and diet programs to enhance health and energy.

**Virgo: (August 24 - September 22)**

You tend to entertain people with your conversation and sense of humor. You may change your image and an unconventional one at that. Your social life would be busy as you would popular among your social circle. Domestic relationships and the home environment would be harmonious and peaceful by the efforts

**Libra: (September 23 - October 23)**

You want your objectives to reflect what you're really about and you are likely to rid yourself of unsatisfying goals. You benefit from being more decisive than usual, and your ability to concentrate and focus helps you to achieve what you set out to do. A new project or goal begun at this time has a good chance of being successful in the long term. Your ability to concentrate on what really matters to you is enhanced. Love and emotional bonds keep the family and loved ones together. You exhibit individualism and brilliance in handling business ventures and collaborations. This is a fabulous time for joining a gym or stepping up exercise and health routines.

**Scorpio: (October 24 - November 22)**

This is a phase where you are more friendly, optimistic, and large-hearted than usual. A cheerful and hopeful outlook increases your chances of gaining cooperation from others. This is a sociable, and perhaps self-indulgent, time when the pursuit of pleasure is one of your high priorities. Communicative abilities will largely be applied to professional world ambitions where knowledge and education are pursued in order to enhance career prospects and financial matters. You may change your dressing style to present a glamorous and unconventional image. Your social life would be busy as you would popular among friends and family. Stick to a regular exercise routine and regular pattern of nutritious diet.

**Sagittarius: (November 23 - December 21)**

You could find that you are more open and trusting with friends and lovers, and that you easily win family's trust. Healthy speculation is favored as financial benefits may come your way. Some people fall in love under this influence. Certain elements of your social and financial life are stabilized, secured, and more reliable. More loving and appreciative relationships with your children may also figure. Your romantic affair and pleasure-seeking activities gives you a big boost of confidence and your personal magnetism runs high to be appreciated. This is an especially spiritual time for you, this is a time when you renew your energy and consider what things are important to you.

**Capricorn: (December 22 - January 20)**

Authority figures, elders, parents, or influential people in your life tend to support and respect you. They are more willing to help you on your road to success. An event may occur that expands your career or professional interests, and you derive more pleasure from these activities. More freedom is likely to be experienced in your career. Integrity and honesty will get you everywhere now. The more willing you are to put yourself in the limelight, the more positive the rewards. You need to keep your eyes open for opportunities and family relations. You would be sensible about your diet, health, hygiene, and fitness needs.

**Aquarius: (January 21 - February 18)**

At the workplace you are likely to spend time in different places and work closely in new associations as you combine good luck and good management. Self-confidence and action are highlighted and you tend to instinctively know the right course of action to take in most situations. You accept the individuality of loved ones and that would be helpful to resolve your conflicts and move ahead in harmony. Stress may crop up at unexpected turns and this would require you to look at some lifestyle changes and even incorporate some techniques like exercise and meditation. The unattached may strengthen a romantic relationship or become involved with a likeminded partner.

**Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)**

A fine balance between optimism and practicality is with you as you discover goals that suit your true self better. A more lenient and contented attitude towards others tends to bring positive circumstances into your life. A tendency to take on more than you can realistically handle should be watched. Your social life and finances stabilize. You find joy in expressing your views and ideas with people around you. You are feeling good in general, and you tend to spread the joy and happiness. You work hard and get appreciation too. This is a good time to build your skills, to get organized, and to attend to your health and wellbeing.

# Think beyond classrooms

By Ranjan K Baruah

Education is one of the oldest subjects being imparted in this part of the country. It is one of the common subjects for the student studying in arts stream after secondary level. The subject can be taken as a major in graduation and post graduation can be done in education. We should not get confused with BA or MA in Education and B Ed or M Ed. These are different courses which are part of the same department in most of the universities.

Some of the areas of study in education include Child Psychology, Adult and Continuing Education, Comparative Education, Educational Technology, Educational Statistics and Research, Abnormal Psychology, Intellectual Measurement and Evaluation, Teacher Education, Problems and Issues of Education. And job types are professor, school teachers, private tutor, education consultant, education counselor, vice principal, principal, coaching centres, education consultancies, education department, home tuitions, private tuitions, publishing house, research and development agencies, schools, among others.

One of the common concepts of the student is that all those who wanted to be teacher should study education. In reality there is more than teaching. One can think of new options and opportunities and more over one may innovate vistas through this subject. In this edition we are trying to publish some of the career options after completing education as subjects. In today's world education has become an industry too.

We should be aware that India holds an important place in the global education industry. The country has more than 1.4 million schools with over 227 million students enrolled and more than 36,000 higher education institutes. India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world. India has become the second largest market for e-learning after the US.

Higher education system in India has undergone quick growth. The total amount of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) inflow into the education sector in India stood at US\$ 1,383.62 million from April 2000 to December 2016, according to data released by Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP).

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved opening of one Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV) in

each of the 62 uncovered districts with an outlay of Rs 2,871 crore (\$ 430.6 million), which is expected to benefit over 35,000 students in rural areas and provide direct permanent employment to 2,914 individuals.

The Ministry of Labour and Employment will set up Model Career Centres (MCC) across the country. Out of the 950 employment exchanges in India, 100 would be developed as model centres with an investment of Rs 350 crore (\$52.5 million).

There are many opportunities and areas where one may get placement or get job. Some of the terms associated with jobs in this subject include curriculum developer, trainer/motivator, teacher, tutor, child care, school administrator, educational consultants, counsellors, media specialist/strategist, educational policy developer, special education teachers, managing non-governmental organisations or civil society organisation, adult literacy and language teachers.

Like MA in education we also hear about B Ed and M Ed. Well, B Ed course can be pursued after graduation. It prepares teachers for upper primary or middle level, secondary and senior secondary classes at the school level according to the National Council of Teacher Education. We shall publish more options related to education in forthcoming edition.

*(Ranjan K. Baruah is a career mentor and can be reached at [bkranjan@gmail.com](mailto:bkranjan@gmail.com) or 9864055558 for any career related queries)*

## FATHER'S DAY

I miss you papa

I miss you papa  
Miss you more  
My blood is cold  
My skins are cold  
I hear death's knock on door.  
I miss you papa  
Miss you to the core

My eyes lose light days are not bright  
I hear death's knock on door.  
Happy Father's day.  
You are my world and  
I love you papa.  
I miss you papa.

*Sonia Choudhury,  
Indian Sign language Teacher*



PROTECTED: A man rides on his bicycle with his three children during a downpour in Amritsar on Saturday. PTI

*“A reformer is one who sets forth cheerfully toward sure defeat.”*

--- Bill Vaughan

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 307

SHILLONG, MONDAY, JUNE 19, 2017

### VIP misconduct!

POLITICIANS think they are a privileged group and can get away with any kind of indiscipline. Telugu Desam MP Diwakar Reddy made a nuisance of himself at Vishakapatnam airport when he was stopped from boarding a plane for being late. Union Civil Aviation Minister and Reddy's party colleague, Ashok Gajapathi Raju was on the scene and muscled in to allow Reddy to take the flight thereby delaying it. Reddy had also issued a stream of foul language. It is imperative that an inquiry be made into the incident. No politician is entitled to preferential treatment. Of course, Reddy is not the only offender. Shiv Sena MP Ravinder Gaikwad had indulged in similar rowdiness and assaulted Air India staff earlier this year. Reddy himself had acted in an objectionable manner earlier damaging the Air India office at Vijaywada airport. One also recalls the drunken behaviour of a Congress Minister on a plane years ago but in that case he had to be dismissed. These political leaders forget they are public servants and behave as if they are above the norms of decent behaviour. They are given huge perks and other benefits for little reason and also allowed freedom to eschew elementary courtesy.

Low cost airlines are expanding but the conduct of some politicians can only impair the growth of the industry. The Gaikwad incident had forced the civil aviation ministry to frame rules for a no-fly list to deal with unruly passengers and ensure the hassle-free travel of other passengers. One wonders if the Telugu Desam connection between Reddy and Raju will allow the former to get off scot-free. If that be the case, how different is the NDA Government from their predecessor and is Modi's call for ending VIP racism an empty rhetoric?

### LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

## A treasure House of Ancient Khasi History

The Hynniewtrep Endeavour Society (HES), which has been formed recently with the purpose of preserving old documents and helping and encouraging writers in History and "other relevant subjects related to the social, cultural and political life of the Hynniewtrep and other activities which will promote and uplift the society," visited the Shillong Records Collection Centre (SRCC). The centre, which is a storehouse of information,

had been set up in 1974 under the care and supervision of Mr L Gilbert Shullai and has a vast collection of valuable and important books and records related to the social and political history of the Hynniewtrep.

The HES, while appreciating the efforts of Mr Shullai, has decided to publish a souvenir to mark the 15th anniversary of SRCC as a token of admiration and appreciation of the Centre.

# Job Creation through Entrepreneurship Development

By H H Mohrmen

Now employment generation is a priority not only in the state of Meghalaya but for the nation too. It is only very recently that the NDA government under the leadership of Narendra Modi has woken up to this very serious problem which is the need to create employment for the huge unemployed or semi-employed workforce in the country. It is rather unfortunate that in spite of a staggering number of unemployed youths in the country, the government does not have reliable statistics of such unemployed youth who are yet to be absorbed in the job market. The last time the country conducted a comprehensive estimation of employment situation in the entire nation was in 2012.

It was only recently that the NDA government setup a task force under Niti Aayog headed by its vice chairman Arvind Panagariya to look into this very important issue. The mandate of the task force is to produce a periodic and a reliable nationwide data on employment in the whole country. Like Kumba Karna, the central government woke up to the gravity of the problem and this can be seen from the fact that the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has even instructed all cabinet ministers to inform the PMO of the number of job that they can create every time they make new proposals to the government. Now the Statistic Ministry also has very recently made an announcement to conduct a periodic nationwide labour force survey and to compile the same and publish the employment data on a quarterly basis. So now everybody is waking up to the reality that to achieve an overall economic growth and development of the country; it is imperative that the country also takes onboard its 512 million strong work force.

The scenario in the country is such that this issue was kept in the back burner till very recently, but one cannot deny that at the state level it is a different story all together. Actually, in spite of not having reliable data at hand, the MUA government has made an attempt to address unemployment which is a very important factor of economic development in the state. The Integrated Basin Development & Livelihoods Project (IBDLP) which is the brain child of Dr Mukul Sangma was

established with the express purpose of addressing this major problem by promoting entrepreneurship amongst the youths of the state. Of course one cannot expect that the Basin program can change the scenario overnight but the Basin intervention has made a lot of things happen at the ground level.

The success of this program can also be gauged from the fact that inter-departmental convergence is now possible and departments are working together to achieve the same goal. Although it took some time for this to happen but now there is no more competition amongst the department because they have accepted that the goal of all government effort is to reach out to the last man in the queue instead of competing among departments so they can collaborate to achieve this goal.

The program was designed such that the Deputy Commissioner is also the chairman of the District Basin Development Units (DBDU) which is the district unit of IBDLP, hence there's a lot of convergence happening between departments. The convergence between the DRDA through MNREGS, the Tourism department and the DBDU, West Jaintia hills is one such case where the improvement work and re-modification of Thadlaskin Lake was made possible. The Pitcher plant lake at Jarain village under the Amlarem subdivision is another case in point where even the community made some contribution to the construction of the lake.

There is still a lot of misconception about the program that Basin is assumed to be just another department but in fact IBDLP is a program and unlike other government schemes, it is community driven and its main objective is to provide training to willing partners to enable them to improve on their livelihood activity. And yet they don't call them beneficiaries anymore because the very fact that the willing public are called partners is to do away with the beneficiary mindset which has given rise to the attitude of grant-receiving that is prevailing amongst

the common people of the state.

The other idea made possible only by IBDLP is the community nurseries of tree saplings which is an attempt to produce community social entrepreneurs, because the community is allowed to sell the saplings to the government or the public. And the idea of raising native tree saplings and fruits trees in the community nurseries is a very good idea because trees endemic to the area have more chances to survive and it is good for the ecology too.

In the West Jaintia Hills, the success of the many popular tourist spots is also because of the convergence that is happening be it Shnongpdeng, Darang or Krangshuri under the Amlarem subdivision or the development of Lum Tiniang under the Laskein development block.

The success of this program is evident from the outcome of the recent Chief Minister's Entrepreneurs' Conclave in which young entrepreneurs from the Khasi and Jaintia hills region of the state came to share their stories of success and failure and to learn from each other. There were a lot of partners who were trained and were able to improve their livelihood activities in the many districts of the state. Basin has also made it possible for partners to undergo training outside the state. The dairy partners were sent to Anand in Gujarat, Smoked-fish partners were sent to Karnataka. Innumerable numbers of partners are trained in piggyery, beekeeping and other livestock activity are now actively engaged in their respective trades. Now those who are engaging in livestock rearing could also avail support for construction of sheds from MNREGS and if need be they are even linked to the bank for loans. After undergoing training some of these partners have also been able to start an enterprise of their own.

The Meghalaya Institute of Entrepreneurship (MIE) in an effort to bring together the entrepreneurs from across the Khasi and Jaintia Hills has recently organised a conclave to this affect. Addressing the conclave, Dr Sangma congratulated the successful entrepreneurs but he also questioned if the new enterprise was able to create

any ancillary activities. Dr Sangma said that he wish to see that the entrepreneurs not only create employment for themselves and those working under them, but their activity should also open up avenues for others to start their own livelihood activities.

Dr Sangma shared his idea of starting lay-by markets on the entire stretch of the national highway wherever it is possible. This is another of Sangma's brilliant idea because we have already seen these makeshift lay-by markets on the national highway from Guwahati to Shillong or from Shillong to Jowai. The need of the hour is to improve the infrastructure of these lay-by markets and maybe even add other important amenities like toilet facilities and even restaurants in the plan. Dr Sangma has foreseen that the only problem which could prevent this idea from becoming a reality is land because many people would not like to part with their land.

Many people have expressed doubts about the IBDLP and questioned if the program would continue if Dr Sangma is no longer the CM of the state. People predict that the IBDLP program will collapse the moment Dr Sangma or the Congress fails to form a government in the state. The way I see it is that IBDLP will remain not only because it is a program which deals with creating livelihood opportunities for the youth but it is well thought out program designed to address the needs that might arise with time. The program is designed in such a way that it could be a platform where foreign funding agencies can put their money and some international funding is already using the IBDLP program to implement their projects. IBDLP can also act as a agency for the government to use corporate funding which comes in the form of CSR.

I write this article at the risk of being called pro-Mukul and pro-Congress which I am not. I support good and practical ideas which are for the betterment of the society no matter where it comes from. In this case I see IBDLP as a well thought of and well conceived program which could bring change to the people of the state.

## Foreign investors gain more under make in India programme of Modi Indian companies not enthused as incentives are lacking

By Subrata Majumder

In a recent policy liberalization, the government has done away with the FIPB route for approval of major foreign direct investment. This is a major policy shift to woo the foreign investment, besides opening doors big way under Make in India campaign. But, there are more such challenges to stimulate the domestic investors.

As a result, foreign investment soared in the country, leaving far behind the growth in investment by domestic investors. During three year period of Modi government, foreign investment surged by 40.5 per cent. India received a record of US \$ 61 billion FDI (including reinvestment earning) in 2016-17. India retained its global top position in receiving FDI in greenfield investment. Against this, domestic investment sullied. Domestic investment increased marginally by 6.5 percent during the three years period.

The efficacy of Make in India is questioned whether it was to woo the foreign investors only. Or, did the gushing flow of foreign investment act as disincentive to the domestic investment? Will the country return to foreign dominated growth path with more participation of foreign investment?

The fact of the matter is that Make in India campaign did not unravel the challenges to stimulate the domestic investors. None of its attempts comprised of any such reforms, which could stimulate the domestic investment. It has become more of a catchphrase in the government corridors and boardrooms of Indian corporates. Unlike reforms in 1991, whose main aim was to open the door to the private sectors, Make in India failed to deliver any new initiative to the domestic investors.

This resulted in a slow pace of growth in employment opportunities. Unemployment was not abated. Even though, according to the National Sample Survey, India's unemployment rate reels under 5 and 8 per cent, the growth in employment in manufacturing sector is stuck due to low penetration of domestic investors. Over 83 percent of workers in India were self-employed, casual and contract workers, according to NITI Aayog report.

The reason for foreign investment not responding to reduce unemployment was that foreign investments were made in the organized sectors. The entrepreneurs chose to stay from labour intensive industries and opt for highly capital or skilled-labour-intensive technology oriented industries.

Fiscal incentives and easy monetary policy are the core demand of domestic investors. Make in India is a four pronged strategy - focusing on New Process, New Infrastructure, New sectors and New mindset. But, none of these strategies served the core demand of domestic investors. For example, high rate of interest continued to be a great burden for the domestic investors. In contrast, foreign investors have an edge with several options for easy money from their parent companies and international banks. Few were to take up the gradual phasing out of higher corporate tax from 30 percent to 25 percent over a

period of five years. Take the case of China. Tax incentive has been the primary tool to attract investment in China. In the wake of China losing its investment attraction due to appreciation of Chinese currency yuan, China granted special tax benefits to its investors. It is known as "Super" tax incentive to qualified equity investors for eligible private companies

In 1991, Dr. Manmohan Singh, the then Finance Minister under Narasimha Rao Prime-Ministership, announced bold measures of economic reforms to open the economy. License Raj was abolished. Procedures were simplified. More sectors were opened for private investment. Taxes and duties were rationalized.

Besides opening the doors big way to the foreign investors under Make in India, global financial crisis and breakdown of trade blocks turned benign for foreign investment in India. The export based economies lost the sheen for foreign investment. China is a case in point. China lost its high attraction for foreign investment due to appreciation of Chinese currency yuan. China's economic growth plunged from double digit growth to less than 7 per cent within three years, lower than India's. China's fall in growth and bubble burst had cascading impact on the investment potentials in emerging economies, of East Asia and South East Asian countries.

Given the large domestic demand and sound financial stability, India emerged a bright spot for the foreign investors. The charm to invest in India was further accelerated by business friendly Narendra Modi's charisma and his Make in India campaign. Under the campaign, several crucial areas were opened to the foreign investors. Ease of doing business perked up with e-governance.

Given this dichotomy between investment by foreign and domestic investors, which failed to create expected employment opportunities, the government has been advised to resort to increase investment in coastal areas to develop the export base industries, with an eye on labour intensive industries. In a major policy move to focus on employment opportunities in the coastal areas, NITI Aayog proposed to set up Coastal Employment Zone (CEZs), replicating Chinese model of SEZ in Three Year Action Agenda (TYAG).

Hitherto, the focuses on employment opportunities were made within the mainland of the country. Big potential exists for development of export based industries in the coastal areas. CEZ can provide a new lease of life to the absorption of working force in the coastal areas.

NITI Aayog proposed incentives on the threshold of employment. It proposed five year corporate tax holiday to firms employing 10,000 workers within three years of tax holiday. Alternatively, zero-rate GST for three years for creating 10,000 jobs and six years for creating 20,000 jobs.

It is hoped that the employment linked investment incentive will gear up the domestic investors' mindset to invest in the coastal areas and increase employment opportunities. (IPA Service)

### TO THE EDITOR

## Restive farmers, distressed leaders

Editor, Much has been said about teaching a person to fish and not giving him/her a fish because the second practice teaches dependency. Similarly if we want to see the worst in someone, then sweeten the person up by frequently giving him/her money. It is like pampering a child who could later become an unruly adult and let down his parents. Well this is what successive governments have done for farmers. They have pampered them without teaching them robust farming methods. Firstly, farmers were encouraged to take loans and when they defaulted on payment the loan and interest was waived. Some political parties have used the "loan waiver" as their ladder for climbing to power, as the BJP did in Uttar Pradesh. Has it not sent out the wrong message to other farmers across the country? Will a farmer from UP not teach his facebook friends from Madhya Pradesh to demand the waiver from their leaders? With each passing day

the farmers from various states have pretty well learned the tricks of the trade and so they now make the state governments yield to their demands. In many cases, they have arm-twisted their leaders as has happened recently in Maharashtra. But have we ever given a serious thought on how many lakh crores have so far been written off? Frankly speaking, much could have been achieved if that colossal amount of money were productively utilized instead of offering as unproductive loans? Big changes could have been brought about in the agricultural sector. Very advanced irrigation and storage system could have been installed across the country and efficient marketing methodologies could have been employed to sell the produce profitably. And, this could have ushered in an impressive trend in agricultural production and marketing strategies. Then automatically the socio-economic status of the farmers could have been raised and as a result, the farmers would have become self-sufficient and happy and the whole country would have been well nourished.

Unfortunately, today every farmer is in distressed, every village parched by drought and insufficiency. And ultimately the governments are now left with no option but to buy the "peace" from the poor farmers by way of waivers as a short-term settlement. But for how long? I guess the government will keep beating their chest when the farmers become restive.

Yours etc.,  
Salil Gwali,  
Shillong-2

## Netas fly high on privileges!

Editor, On March 23, Shiv Sena MP Ravindra Gaikwad had assaulted Air India staffer, duty manager R Sukumar, 60, inside an aircraft at the Delhi airport. The national carrier as well as other domestic airlines then barred him from taking their flights. Subjected to the slightest of personal discomfort, these peoples' representatives resort to violence. Why can't they raise their voices for the welfare of the average traveller? Certain incidents leave you horrified. The manner in which Ravindra Gaikwad thrashed the Air India employee, provoked much public and

media uproar! How can an advocate of violence become the people's representative in a non-violent country? A day after the incident, on March 24, Gaikwad was unfazed and shamelessly stubborn. He proudly announced that he hit the airline employee 25 times with his slipper. He lost his temper when he didn't find the facilities in accordance with his whims, but did he think how the airline treats average citizens?

The ban was revoked after the MP wrote a letter to Civil Aviation Minister Ashok Gajapathi Raju expressing regret over the incident. However, the Civil Aviation Minister stated that aircraft safety will not be compromised after a purported video of the MP thrashing the Air India officer went viral and triggered widespread condemnation, even from within the government.

Following the incident, two FIRs were filed at the Indira Gandhi International Airport police station for assault and delaying the plane. Delhi Police is still probing the incident. Thereafter, in the aftermath of the Gaikwad episode, Air India had proposed a set of new guidelines to deal with

unruly passengers, which included hefty fines of up to Rs 15 lakh. Air India joined five other airlines to ban the lawmaker and demanded a "no-fly list" for unruly customers.

Now again on June 16, Telugu Desam Party MP J C Diwakar Reddy allegedly went to the Indigo Office next to the check-in counter and created a ruckus at the Visakhapatnam airport after the airline did not let him board a flight to Hyderabad as he arrived late. Is the MP not aware that as per DGCA norms airlines close the check-in counters for all domestic flights 45 minutes prior to departure?

Can such parliamentarians answer this: If people begin to emulate such unruly behaviour, including that of getting physical with airlines staff what will happen to the country's law and order situation?

Yours etc.,  
Samare  
Bandyopadhyay  
Kolkata- 91

## Non-tribals always soft targets!

Editor, There have been

widespread protests against the railroad at Byrnihat, which has resulted in petrol bomb throwing incidents at several places in Shillong by anti-social elements taking advantage of the situation. The worst affected is the business community which have been targeted either at their business premises or their residence. Although a local dorbar has condemned the incident at Umsohsun, the political parties are tight-lipped and have no guts to condemn the incidents. Why is a particular community being targeted when they have nothing to do with the rail project? I therefore condemn the incidents of petrol bomb throwing and urge upon the law enforcing authorities to be more vigilant and book the miscreants for their heinous crimes.

Yours etc.,  
SL Singhanian,  
Via email

Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.

*“Do not go where the path may lead,  
go instead where there is no path  
and leave a trail.”*

--- Cato the Elder

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 308

SHILLONG, TUESDAY, JUNE 20, 2017

### NDA's presidential candidate

AT last the BJP-led NDA Government has shown its cards. It has announced its presidential candidate. If all goes well, and there is nothing to suggest it will not, then 71 year old Ram Nath Kovind, the present Governor of Bihar will be the next President of India. Not much is known about Kovind, except that he is a Dalit leader and a former Rajya Sabha member from Uttar Pradesh, elected by the BJP between 1994-2000 and 2000-2006. Kovind is an advocate by profession and practices in Delhi. Kovind has been the former President of the BJP Dalit Morcha (1998-2002) and President of the All-India Koli Samaj. He also served as national spokesperson of the party. He was appointed Governor of Bihar in August 8, 2015. It is learnt that Kovind appeared for the civil services examination on three occasions and succeeded in the third attempt but did not join as he was selected for the allied services instead of the IAS. He then chose to practise law in the Delhi High Court and later became Advocate-on-Record of the Supreme Court in 1978.

The BJP had kept the name of Kovind under wraps even when its leaders led by Home Minister Raj Nath Singh had met with Congress, President Sonia Gandhi and CPI (M) General Secretary, Sitaram Yechury last week. The only thing that many conjectured was that the BJP's presidential candidate would be one that both the Congress and the CPI (M) would find difficult to reject. Indeed, no political party can justifiably reject a Dalit candidate without being put on the back-foot. After all, in India it's the politics of appeasement that never fails to work. Having shown their trump card, BJP President, Amit Shah tweeted, "I believe that all political parties will come forward and support NDA's candidate for the President's office." Until a day ago there were rumours that LK Advani might be the BJP's presidential nominee. The BJP clearly has its agenda all sorted out. Kovind's selection will take the wind out of the BSP's sails and render Mayawati inconsequential.

### LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

### Reservation for ST's and SC's

Mr Rajiv Gandhi said last week that his government would soon place before Parliament a Bill to extend the reservation policy in favour of Harijans and tribals for another ten years. The announcement appropriately synchronized with the birthday anniversary of Dr B R Ambedkar, in celebration of which the Prime Minister was laying the foundation of a College in Lucknow in memory of this eminent leader of the down trodden and the weak and backward in the country. Reservation for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes is a basic State policy enshrined in our Constitution piloted by Dr Ambedkar in the Constituent Assembly which initially fixed it for a period of ten years. Several extensions have since been granted to the policy during subsequent decades. This has been no concession to the Harijans and the tribals as such, but in fact rather and admission of government's own failure to bring these undeveloped and underdeveloped sections of society at par with the rest of the country's population, necessitating repeated extension of the policy.

What is more deplorable is that despite this policy of reservation in full operation uninterrupted for over four decades, the disparity between the weaker sections and the rest seems to have tended to grow. There must be something seriously wrong in the implementation of the policy of reservation

and this has to be thoroughly investigated. In the matter of recruitment to public services in particular, for instance, it is often noticed that the quota reserved for the Scheduled Castes or Tribes remain unfilled due to dearth of qualified candidates from those for whom the vacancies are earmarked. Here, too, the fault must be laid at the door of the government. A mere mechanical continuation of the reservation policy does not carry the objective far enough unless the whole gamut of governmental activities is permeated by a genuine desire to uplift all categories of our diverse people to the same level of attainment and progress. The government's educational policy and its implementation has particularly to bear the brunt of the criticism that even the minimum number are not available to take advantage of the quota reserved in particular public services.

There is another aspect to the whole policy of reservation, which a section of the leadership of the Scheduled categories themselves have lately started at thinking. It is a responsibility of the people concerned to ensure that the natural instinct of self help, which is another name for self respect, is not in any way blunted under a safe cover of reservation. On the last analysis it may be seen in many cases as killing the initiative and enterprise, which the people are capable of displaying.

# Gazing into the 2018 Crystal ball

By Toki Blah

It's already mid June 2017 and the monsoons have finally caught up with us and so will the 2018 Meghalaya Assembly Polls which are just around the corner. In between lies the answer to the pre and post 2018 enigma of Meghalaya. What's happening and what's going to happen? Things are already happening and from all likelihood it's going to be a gut-wrenching, bumpy roller coaster political ride for everyone. In the beginning there was this whole upsurge of a new found Khasi nationalism. Phew! a few months back the local media was full of it; talks of a new political dispensation for the Khasi Hills filled the air; emergence of a new breed of leaders was promised; birth of the PDF was proudly and triumphantly announced and then suddenly like the surface of a small windswept puddle, the turbulent excited waters returned to their once placid serene calmness. The wonder of it all is that everyone too then returned to their normal day to day activities as if nothing had ever happened! Did wet rain-swept Mawsynram simply undergo the experience of a mirage?

Then came the BJP and in true monsoon style politics, full of thunder and lightning. We will contest all 60 seats and no pre-poll tie-ups please, thank you so much! Enrolment drives began left, right and centre and we will form the next Govt in Meghalaya. For the first time in the political history of the state and the country as a whole, an amazing new strategy at winning hearts and minds was launched. A senior party functionary threatened to lodge FIRs against anyone who dared to speak ill of the party and its policies. Wow, Incredible self confidence really! Then came the cropper. The NDA Govt at the centre came up with rules and regulations aimed directly at crippling the sale and supply of beef cattle to the state and its people. Tradition, culture, indigenous food habits and consumption of nutritious beef suddenly came under threat and the hue and cry over the issue, mind you, has just begun. In Garo hills party members resigned in droves while in Khasi and Jaintia Hills a smouldering public resentment against the BJP, continues to fester and rise. The pompous huffing and the puffing has

evaporated as the party replaces its former swagger with desperate attempts at damage control. That the BJP is resolute to back anyone and anything but the Congress is an established fact. Simply put, like poles repel each other!

In politics, solemnity of purpose can also easily blend and be indistinguishable from the absurd. The recent highly dramatised unity move of the regional parties is a case in point. HS Shylla, in his usual energetic and inimitable style, pushed, shoved, hustled and bustled to bring about a pre-poll alignment and understanding between the regional parties. A political myth called Khasi unity. Regional diehards and NGOs waved their palm fronds in happy anticipation and according to Shylla all were enthusiastically appreciative of this 'Lai Lama' model for regional stability. But not everyone it seems was prepared to sing Halleluia. In his enthusiasm Shylla had somehow punctured the ego factor, that majestic hot air balloon all politicians need to keep afloat and the whole thing collapsed into a farce. UDP and HSPDP, sans HS Shylla, finally rose up from the debris and came up with a comical concoction of a pre-poll alliance, watertight in all political respects but practically perforated with friendly fights. The KHAM was classed either as a non-regional party or as inconsequential, while the PDF figured nowhere in the unity calculations. Regional unity thus continues to remain as elusive as the Holy Grail while post poll coalition with either the Congress, the NPP or the BJP is conveniently left open-ended for opportunistic politics to decide. Did someone, sometime mention clean value based politics?

Then of course there is the new kid on the block, the NPP. With a reportedly well established voter base in the Garo Hills, with invisible apron strings tied to the NDA, the party is expected to emerge as the dark horse and king maker of 2018. In the disunited Khasi & Jaintia Hills, NPP reputation precedes its

physical presence, where the greatest challenge would be identifying suitable candidates in tune with the party's political ambitions. Off hand, the task appears formidable unless, in the course of time, people jump ship to join up with the new party. Ah, lest we forget and overlook the Congress, the Grand Old Party. In 2018 the GOP will enter the polls with a huge handicap, the baggage of a decade old nonstop infighting plus 10 years tarnished incumbency. As of today the Congress seems to be gripped by a Hamlet like mindset, to oust or not to oust those who defy the party whip. A mumbling, fumbling, doddering party leadership has in no way helped boost the party image which appears paralysed and helpless, indecisiveness at its best. Yet though battered and bruised, the Congress in Meghalaya, from amongst all the other parties, still presents the face of a party still likely to cobble up a fair number of seats for itself. It might still just emerge, not on its own merit but by default, as the single largest party in the 2018 fray. It might still have a few surprises up its sleeve.

Question on everybody's lips today is, 'What's going to happen next?'. Two totally different events might occur, with absolutely no connection with one another, but perhaps with the exact same outcome. The two events might be engineered or they might just happen on their own. Firstly, the ongoing KSU agitation over the Bymihat railhead might escalate and take a turn for the worse. The law and order situation in the state, especially Khasi Hills and Shillong might deteriorate. With a BJP govt at the centre ever on the look out to settle scores with Dr Mukul, the MUA might be shown the door and the imposition of President's rule cannot be ruled out. Secondly, there are rumours that certain Congress MLAs, including ministers, are just biding their time before they jump ship. To which ship. God only knows, but as I said, for the moment, this remains a conjecture that might or might not happen. If it however does happen and when it happens, the MUA would be reduced to a minority Govt just waiting for the centre to intervene. President's rule in Meghalaya in the coming months is therefore not such

a far-fetched possibility after all. As of now everyone appears to be frantically contributing towards it.

Another question lingers in the monsoon drenched air - who is likely to form the next Government post 2018 polls? The possibility of the Congress returning as the single largest party, because of the inability of the others to come to a united pre-poll understanding, exists as a distinct possibility. This however does not in the least mean that the Congress will automatically be invited to form the next Govt! Far from it, if past examples of Goa, Manipur and elsewhere are anything to go by. The outcome of all this will mean that political instability will again be the lot of Meghalaya for the next five years. Meghalaya politics and its politicians will continue to remain visionless and clueless. Politicians will continue to scramble for power regardless of the means and oblivious to everything else. Governance and development, despite everyone's wishes to the contrary, will continue to nose-dive into oblivion. Leaderless and directionless, the people under the tutelage of pressure groups and traditional institution leaders will continue to waste their time on highly emotive but unproductive issues. Infrastructure, most importantly education and health will continue to be neglected at the cost of our future generations.

The irony is at the end of all this, the demand for saviours will again overshadow the need for genuine leaders. Saviours will call for further withdrawal into our shells; for more protective walls to save us; for rigidity and dogmatism in tradition to protect us from the future (ban kiar na ka lawe ba phyrnai????). A 69 % literate but thoroughly uneducated rabble will then sing its hosannas and throw its petrol bombs as a sign of approval. On unfounded fear and on such hazardous and perfidious beliefs Meghalaya and its people will continue to live out this century. May God have mercy on us all!

(Author is President of ICARE)

### TO THE EDITOR

### “Stupid” comment on broken marriages

Editor,

With reference to a news item in your paper (ST June 14, 2017) under the caption “Pastors not to pursue case against State Marriage Act”, the Maitshaphrang would like to clarify that we had never made any statement that “pastors do not counsel families that are on the verge of break-down” because we do not have the information nor the figures to support or to make such a comment.

But in responding to the above, it is quite an absurd comment for senior advocate VGK Kynta to make, as reported, “We counsel families the moment we see in-fighting. How does he know that we don't counsel? It is a very stupid comment.” We are not talking about isolated cases here, but a major problem affecting the state and he is not in a position to have available statistics to know how many are being

counseled and how many are not in the entire state, especially in cases of unregistered marriages. But when you see the gravity of the problem of broken marriages, both registered and unregistered, even among Christian couples, it is the broken families themselves who can be the better judge to state whether or not they were counseled.

The unanimous support from all the MLAs both ruling and opposition while passing the Meghalaya Compulsory Registration of Marriage Act just shows the seriousness of the problem.

But merely having a law will not solve the problem. We need active public participation and the support of all religious institutions, women's organizations, concerned NGOs and individuals to make the general public aware of the law and the importance to register all marriages irrespective of their religious or non-religious affiliations especially since the marriage registration certificate is now mandatory for all official purposes.

Yours etc.,  
Michael N. Syiem,  
Viaemail

### Stop spreading misinformation on GST!

Editor,

I read with great amusement Sujit De's letter captioned "GST a caste-based tax" (ST June 17, 2017). The writer clearly has no idea of the taxation structure in this country and his ultra left leanings are written all over the wall. I do not mean to correct someone who clearly has no idea of what GST entails but I felt that this letter needs to be written so as to enlighten the general public on some of the features of GST. The new taxation regime which is planned to be rolled out from 1 July 2017 will subsume Central Excise & Service Tax and most of the state tax levies (such as VAT, entertainment tax, amusement & betting tax and the likes). It has to be understood that GST will have to incorporate the elements of the erstwhile Central Excise which is essentially a tax on industrial manufacturing. In this context it is apparent that

braille paper, typewriters, hearing aids are all manufactured items and hence manufacturing duties which were levied earlier need to be incorporated in the GST. As regards items pointed out by the individual such as sacred thread (made of cotton strands) and vibhuti (ash), it does not even need clarification that these are not manufactured. And to comment on pancharmit (made of five elements milk, yoghurt, honey, jaggery and ghee) which is prepared by the priest as an offering to Gods during ceremonies is height of ludicrousness.

While everyone is welcome to opine on anything and everything under this country, I personally feel that open spreading of misinformation is what ails this country and needs to be checked.

Yours etc.,  
Sumit Kar  
Shillong- 1

Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.

# Demystifying the Palestine-Israel Paradigm

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

## BEATING THE RHETORIC

For more than five decades now the Middle East question has continued to haunt global policymakers. The genesis of this conflict lies in the aftermath of World War II when the Jews were given a separate homeland by displacing the Palestinians from their traditional homes. Since then the Middle East has become an arena for unending wars with the Arab states locked with Israel in a series of bloody conflicts. Israel with its superior arms and the support of the Western World has always usurped the Arab states but the human costs have been too high.

The present round of attacks and counter attacks can be traced back to the 1994 Oslo agreements. Following the Oslo accords the Palestinian Authority was established to govern areas of West Bank on the East and the Gaza Strip. It was the charismatic Yasser Arafat who was at helm of this peace deal and it went a long way in ensuring peace in the Middle East or so the world leaders thought.

After the Accord some areas passed onto the Palestinian Authority's (PA) hands over series of negotiations and deals; however it lost major areas during the Second Intifada where Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) retook strategic positions. After the Second Intifada the IDF unilaterally moved away from the Gaza Strip leaving it under the complete control of the PA leadership. Trouble started brewing in 2006 when Hamas won the elections. Soon after the elections, Israel, the United States, Canada, and the European Union froze all funds to the Palestinian Authority, after Hamas refused to recognize Israel, renounce violence, and to accept the past agreements. These countries view Hamas as a terrorist organization.

The core point of Hamas was liberation of Jerusalem - an issue on which Israel had a non-negotiable position. The world leaders couldn't effectively de-escalate the conflict and bring the Palestinian leadership to the table. Instead the world leaders rallied behind a new government under the Fateh leadership. The new Fateh leadership claimed to govern all areas of Palestine; in essence its control was limited to the West Bank since the Gaza Strip was effectively under Hamas. Such a situation quickly escalated into a fratricidal war between Hamas and Fateh which further deteriorated the condition of Palestine. In 2011 under the aegis of Cairo, Hamas and Fateh agreed to form a joint unity government. However within one year the situation deteriorated so much that for the first time in 2012 Hamas declared that it was considering unilateral independence of the Gaza Strip. The net result of the fratricidal struggle between Hamas and Fateh is a further division of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people.

Yet, in the end, this conflict has to come to an end and negotiations are the only way out. This is in the interest of the people of the Middle East and long lasting peace in the region. Hamas must accept Israel's right to exist while Israel must accept the Hamas leadership which might eventually spread its control to the West Bank. The issue has to move beyond the Fajh-5 rockets and address the larger dimensions of the Israeli-Hamas leadership. A three way division would be unfortunate as it would effectively divide the aspirations of the Palestinians many of whom laid down their lives for this cause. So in the end a two nation theory would be the only way forward - a Palestinian state accepting the Israeli state's right to exist and vice versa.

(Views expressed are personal)

.Instead they began to support the Palestinian Authority of Fatah in a bid to divide the Palestinian movement. What the world leaders have effectively forgotten is such divisive politics always bring more trouble than peace. Being unable to conclusively engage with Hamas and refusing to side Mahmoud Abbas in the UN bid, the world leaders have effectively given an image of a party which stands against the expression of the legitimate interests of the Palestinian people.

The key to understanding the increase in rocket attacks in recent times is the internal rivalry within Hamas. A major distinction has to be made between the Hamas leaders in Gaza and the "politbureau" members who reside in foreign nations- responsible for Hamas relationship with other countries. The traditional rulers in exile of the Hamas leadership had relations with the Shia leadership of Iran and Syria. This is seeing a rapid new realignment with the home government in Gaza warming up to the Sunni realignment of Turkey and Qatar. Thus we are seeing a strategic shift in the ideological composition and backing of the Hamas leadership.

Also since the PA government is effectively weakening and the PA soldiers are in effect working with the IDF to stop military attacks emanating from the Gaza Strip by renewing the crisis, the domestic Hamas leadership will try to gain the ground that the PA government in West bank has lost. In trying to stand up to the "tyrannical Zionist state" Hamas hopes to emerge as the true leader of the Palestinian people and torchbearer of the Palestine aspirations for statehood.

Another major thorn in the present crisis is the issue concerning the Fajh-5 rockets. The Hamas leadership at this point seems to be in a mood for negotiations but the Israeli government cannot afford to with Hamas possessing arms which can effectively target the heart of Israel. And at this point finding middle ground will be difficult since Hamas would not like to let go of weapons which can strengthen their position vis-a-vis the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. Israel simply cannot live with Hamas having these weapons in its arsenal.

*"A man who moralizes is usually a hypocrite, and a woman who moralizes is invariably plain."*

--- Ralph Waldo Emerson

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 309 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 21, 2017

### Long wait for justice!

THE Bombay blasts of 1993 were a horrendous event. Bombay has become Mumbai and it has taken 24 years to convict six men who killed 257 people. Some of the prime accused including Dawood Ibrahim who masterminded the crime is yet to be brought to book. The 1993 blasts were the darkest event in the history of Indian crime. Mumbai's mafia joined hands with cross-border terror via Dubai and Lisbon. Sophisticated policing was called for to tackle the wide network. But even after such a long gap, the internationalizing of the search for the criminal has not been accomplished. For instance, Dawood Ibrahim is reported to be in Pakistan but cannot be nabbed. India's criminal justice moves at a glacial pace. Its foundations are caught in a time warp.

Prosecution in the 1993 Mumbai blast case is yet to be completed. Not merely the victims but the entire society is frustrated by the mills of justice grinding exceedingly slow. One accused person was acquitted last week but he has already been brutalized by treatment as an under trial for so many years. India should improve its record of combating crime if it wishes to win the confidence of Interpol. Organised crime helps terror groups. India's safety depends on the efficiency of its criminal justice system.

### LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

### Sikkim Assembly asks centre to withdraw central taxes

The Sikkim Assembly today termed the extension of the central taxes of the state to administer its own affairs. An emergency session of the legislative assembly convened for the purpose resolved that the central government "be pleased" to withdraw the Income Gift and Wealth taxes, extended to the state by presidential notification.

The assembly noted that the Government of Sikkim was neither consulted nor its views invited before the notification was issued in the name of the President of India. It resolved that the state of Sikkim be allowed to exercise its own vested and statutory rights of collection of Income tax under the existing Income Tax Manual, 1948. The manual of the erstwhile Kingdom of Sikkim had been negated by the extension of the direct central taxes which should have become effective from April 1 but for non-cooperation by the State Government.

The resolution maintained that the Sikkim Income Tax Manual as

protected under Articles 371 of the Constitution which pertains to the merger of Sikkim with India. The argument against wealth tax was that the state was solely agricultural. Besides, the urban nature was owing to agricultural wealth being capitalized in the form of residential buildings. "It is also noted that the time is not ripe for levying property tax on the building and lands on which the buildings stand."

### Town and Country Planning Advisory Council constituted

The Meghalaya Govt. in a notification issued here recently has constituted the State Town and Country Planning Advisory Council under the Meghalaya Town and Country Planning Act, with the Minister incharge of Urban Development Department as its Chairman. The Council will consist of seven official members and three non-official members with the Director of Urban Development Department as its Secretary.

# An Open Letter to the Future Chief Minister of Meghalaya

By Gary Marbaniang

Even though it is still early days to bring you into the picture but people from certain sections of society have been speaking your name and suggesting that you should emerge from certain preferred parts of the state. As far as I'm concerned, this subject is irrelevant. What matters is that you should put the interests of the State and its people before your personal interests. The ban in coal mining has jeopardized the livelihoods of many but I want to point out that for the past two decades or so the young job seekers of Meghalaya have been going through a torrid time looking for jobs. Now the situation is only getting worse. Our past leaders have turned a blind eye to a situation that is spinning out of control. Jobs in the government sector have reached saturation point but the youths of the state still see the government as their premier employer. I also grew up with that same mindset and consider myself fortunate to be an employee of the Central government. But for the thousands of unemployed youths of the state, our past leaders have failed to address this maddening situation.

People from rural areas still migrate in droves to the capital town of Shillong hoping to land their "dream job" in Meghalaya Secretariat or some other government departments. I was in a taxi with two Pnar boys and when we reached Meghalaya Secretariat, one of the boys narrated a story of a person he knows who is working on a meagre income on contractual basis in that famed government institution, barely managing to make ends meet. Times have certainly changed. This kind of migration may have worked well in the 70's and 80's when the ratio of government jobs to educated youths was almost equal but today, colleges in the city alone churn out thousands of graduates every year and most of them look up to the government for jobs. The disproportionate ratio of government jobs to the number of job seekers has reached alarming levels.

Recently a Republican politician in the USA was interviewed by CNN to assess the 100 days of the Trump Presidency. He was categorical in stating that the ultimate yardstick for judging Trump's presidency is the number of jobs that will be created two or three years down the line or at the end of the presidency. Franklin Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan and even Barack

Obama ended their presidency on a high approval rating since they were able to turn around the economy. But here in Meghalaya a politician's legacy is judged by the number of assets he's able to accumulate for himself. It is a pathetic situation and the people of Meghalaya are party to this regretful situation. Mr future Chief Minister, we want this aberration from normal political behaviour to end and every corrupt politician must be accountable for his sins. All accomplices to this crime, whether bureaucrat or technocrat should also be given the same treatment. The unholy nexus between politicians-bureaucrats -technocrats must end immediately once you assume office.

Coming to the education system in the state, a grim situation exists. Our education system is still stuck in second gear when other advanced states in the country have shifted to a higher gear. Our schools and colleges still churn out unemployable graduates. We're caught in our dreamy little world where working for the government is the dream scenario. Other advanced states in the country are bracing themselves for a period where automation will result in layoffs of thousands of workers and here we are still obsessed with a legacy that the British Raj left us. A total revamp of the education system is the need of the hour. And by revamping the education system it doesn't mean doing away with English as a medium of instruction or as a subject of study.

Mr future Chief Minister, our command of the English language is in fact one of our biggest strengths but we have failed to realise this and make use of it to reap full economic benefits from it. Casting pearls before swine is an exemplary phrase to describe our underutilization of the English language for economic gains. The much talked about Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry provides the Philippines, an emerging economy in East Asia with 1.3 million jobs and 25 billion dollars in revenue, nearly 10 times the size of the economy of Meghalaya! According to World Bank estimates, the same industry is expected to generate well over 50 billion dollars and provide

some 2.6 million jobs for young Filipinos by 2020! If we could capture even a fraction of this market, it will generate employment for thousands of our youths.

Tourism as an employment generating sector has also not reached full potential. If we want to develop high end tourism market in our State, we must work in tandem with other North Eastern States. Kaziranga National Park in Assam, Hornbill festival of Nagaland and the Living Root Bridges of Meghalaya could be promoted as a single tour package. If there is a concerted effort to coordinate such ideas we could give international holiday destinations like Thailand a run for their money. Recent data coming out of Thailand shows that the tourism sector accounted for a staggering 18 percent of the country's GDP in 2016.

Construction of a world class theme park in Sohra, one of the most popular holiday destinations with domestic tourists from across the country wouldn't be a bad idea too, considering that Acoland is such a hit with the people of Meghalaya and the rest of the region.

Mr future Chief Minister I also hope you are aware that the Agriculture sector is in really bad shape. Landlessness, small holdings, low yield and unproductive forms of agriculture is affecting farmers across the state. Disguised unemployment and poverty is rampant. The only saving grace is that there are no farmer suicides yet in Meghalaya. States like Sikkim have made rapid strides in Agriculture by focusing on areas such as Aquaculture and Horticulture where high yield farming is possible. I recall my geography teacher telling us that the yield per hectare of coffee in Ri-Bhoi district is at par with Brazil. This statement has stuck with me to this day. Further research must be done in areas where there is scope for improvement and farmers in the state must be encouraged to venture into commercial farming. And I also hope that you create a situation where farmers are able to find the markets for their products and more warehousing and cold storage facilities are created so that their produce does not go waste. And yes inflation could wreak havoc on the lives of ordinary people especially farmers. What happened in Madhya

Pradesh recently should be an eye opener for all of us. Farmers lives cannot be taken for granted and every effort should be taken to ensure that even if a transition from the agriculture to the secondary or tertiary sector is to happen it should be a smooth one.

As far as the threat of influx and illegal immigration is concerned, may I remind you that the threat is a real one! We are surrounded by a 150 million strong neighbouring country where a movement of just 1 million of its citizens across the border over a period of time would cause a marked change in the demography of our state! The indigenous people of the state and its unique culture must be protected at any cost. But I would also urge you to consider the persecuted ones who migrated from across the border and settled in our state before 1971. They should be treated as bonafide residents. Those who migrated to our state in the years leading up to 1971 did so under extraordinary circumstances. My family had a first-hand experience in that exodus of refugees from across the border. My grandfather and others like him living in the border towns and villages were awarded contracts to give out rations to these refugees. My grandfather and father were stationed at the border town of Balat to give out rations to these refugees but a serious illness struck my grandfather immediately after the process of rationing began and they had to return to their village never to complete the rationing exercise. But though their involvement in this process was brief, they witnessed the pain that these refugees experienced in their journey to an unknown land. My family did not strike gold from this refugee experience but the brief exposure made them see the human side of a painful conflict. Likewise these people and their descendants must be treated as stakeholders to the growth and development of our state.

I will end by reminding you that it doesn't matter where you hail from as long as you are a capable, honest, hardworking, independent-minded, God fearing person. Most importantly you should put the interest of Meghalaya and its people above anything else.

# Till the cows come home

By B M Lanong

In quick successions, a number of controversial issues are popping up one after another, all of which shake the country and public morale.

While the vexed cow slaughter issue is still hanging on, the BJP government did not hesitate to jump over the Fourth Estate, when for no cogent reason, come to think of it, the CBI raided the residence of the articulate gentleman and senior media chief of the NDTV, Prannoy Roy, for the alleged bank fraud, which is actually the NDTV shareholders' loan availed from the bank, pending repayment of course, for which Roy and his family members had to bear the brunt.

The media fraternity in its reaction termed the raid as a mischievous attempt to gag press freedom, for refusing to kow-tow to the government, while the NDTV in its news slot, repeated that "no matter how much politicians attack us, we will not give up the fight for freedom and the independence of media in India." No doubt, it is a sad moment and bad omen for the free press in India.

Then the ripple effect of the nightmare of a melodrama of the last November midnight demonisation is still being felt by the people and which has seriously plunged the

intrinsicly, especially when the remark seeks to obliterate the selfless sacrifice and credibility of the distinguished leader.

Amit Shah, if only in deference to Gandhi's age, does owe an apology to him as widely expressed.

### Prime Cow Issue

Whether the BJP government and its leadership like or lump it, it is their agenda to forcibly ban cow slaughter in the country and their agenda has been well carried out in several states, which had evoked widespread reaction prompting even their own leaders in Garo Hills and elsewhere to quit the party in opposition.

The Union Minister of State, Kiren Rijju, in league with his party's stand, abused his opponents, citing political reasons, for according to him, cow slaughter is a non-issue in north east, in contrast with what is widely believed, that north-east, including Arunachal is the graveyard for Indian cows.

The misconception about cow slaughter should be properly understood from cruelty to animals, which the latter is more prominent in the economic sectors, like industries and agriculture, using the bulls to the maximum all throughout their life and on ageing and finding no longer useful discarding

**The loss and sufferings of those who could not meet their urgent health care, cancellations of fixed marriages, educational, travelling programmes, appointments and the likes were a few of those that can be mentioned of. Many in Meghalaya feel this as a 'demonisation effect' instead.**

normal life of citizens into a chaotic mess and hit the rural sector in particular, very hard.

The loss and sufferings of those who could not meet their urgent health care, cancellations of fixed marriages, educational, travelling programmes, appointments and the likes were a few of those that can be mentioned of. Many in Meghalaya feel this as a 'demonisation effect' instead. But the moot question which still baffles the people in general is, why they have to suffer for the fault of the high and mighty and the black money launderers, none of whom was ever heard being caught and punished, nor any black money recovered.

On the contrary however, for all the economic measures planned and applied, now the central statistics authority came up with the provisional estimates, that the GDP growth had shrunk from 8 percent in 2015-16 to 7.1 percent in 2016-17.

What a damp squib indeed! Public are eagerly looking forward to the final report.

### Myopic Leadership

Myopia is definitely an unpalatable language, especially when it is attached to leaders of any public concern or profession. But in this case, no less a leader than the BJP President, Amit Shah himself, who while raking up the last century's event, relegated the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi to a 'bahut chatur banya' (a very shrewd person from the business class), the characterisation of the globally-adored freedom fighter, was deplored by many.

The slur attached to the reputation of a non-violent freedom fighter of the nation, by a person who was not part of the freedom movement, is mischievous

them. But for those who eat beef, even after their retirement from the field, bulls are well-cared for either for slaughter or for sale.

One should realize that every part of the cattle is useful, from its skin and hide, meat and milk, its nutrition value, down to the excreta turned-cowdung, which is acknowledged as the best manure for organic farming. Even its urine is used by many for medicinal and religious purposes. The cow is therefore not only loved and cared, but venerated too.

The Khasis during slaughter of domesticated animals or birds follow their professional ethics and offer prayers, 'hei ho, leit suk sha la ka jaka, mab ia ngi u bynwing na ka bynta ka jingdonkam jong u.' (behold, go in peace where you belong, forgive man for his needs.)

The position of the cow can also be gauged from its subject being discussed time and again in the country's Legislatures and Judiciaries.

The Supreme Court in its order from Madhya Pradesh Civil Appeal No. 8250 SC AIR 1996-2076, noted that "a total ban is not permissible, if under economic conditions keeping useless bull or bullock will be a burden on the society and therefore, not in public interest....It also imposes unreasonable restriction on fundamental rights of butchers."

People are still pinning their hopes and looking forward to BJP government to come to terms with the country's tradition, oneness, shade and strength by addressing the sensitive issues of the people with utmost sense of fairness and maturity and with all due respect to the Constitution.. not by unnecessarily reopening unsettled cases and thereby flaring up law and order, till the cows come home.

### TO THE EDITOR

### Demand for Gorkhaland state legitimate!

Editor,

Once again the demand for Gorkhaland state under the Darjeeling Hill District including adjacent areas has resurfaced and gained momentum. There was large scale agitation for quite a long time by the Gorkha National Liberation Front led by Subhash Ghising during the 1980s which culminated in the formation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council in 1988 during the reign of the CPI (M). Then the same demand led by Bimal Gurung's Gorkha Janmukti Morcha led to the formation of Gorkha Territorial Administration. However, the creation of the above institutions has not improved the lives of people living in Hill District. The West Bengal Government continued its step- motherly treatment towards this District. Many of the

packages were not implemented as agreed upon in the agreement post the settlements. It was alleged that the leaders who piloted the agitations which led to the formation of DGHC and GTA were better off but the lot of the people living in the district remained stagnant or degenerated further. The dissatisfaction of the people is palpable. It only needed a spark to trigger off the agitation. This came in the form of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's statement to impose Bengali in schools from classes I to X. This was quickly picked up by the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha which has now turned into a widespread agitation. In fact the Nepali language which is widely spoken by the people of Darjeeling was recognised in 1961.

The only solution to this protracted problem is to grant statehood to the Darjeeling Hill District including the Dooars etc. The Gorkhas of this part of West Bengal, including other communities

living therein rightly deserve to get a separate state for their betterment and to achieve their aspirations. Their demand therefore is highly justified and the Government of West Bengal and the central government ought to yield to the demand.

Yours etc.,  
Philip Marwein,  
Via email

### GST cruel towards disabled

Editor,

In his letter, "Stop spreading misinformation on GST!" (ST June 20, 2017), Sumit Kar has pointed out that non-manufactured items are not incorporated in the GST. Without going into the nuance of whether sacred thread (which is to be made and prepared from cotton strands) is a manufactured item or not, we can easily see that wooden footwear (khadau)

is a manufactured product which has been put in the exempt category of GST. And agarbatti which is certainly another manufactured item has attracted only 5 per cent GST. On the contrary, GST has proposed as much as 12 per cent levy on Braille paper, Braille watches and hearing aids and 18 per cent on Braille typewriters and cars for physically disabled that till now have been completely exempted from all taxes and duties including sales tax, excise and customs.

My letter is intended not to criticize GST as a whole but to point out its cold shoulder attitude towards our disabled brothers and sisters. We must not forget that such aids for disabled as Braille papers/ typewriters, wheelchairs and hearing implants are critical for their survival and therefore must be placed in the exempt category.

To strengthen and to make GST a more effective tool for our progress and to

make it more inclusive in nature, the space for suggestions must not be closed. And we need to be more open to such suggestions.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Kolkata

### Nothing much about IBDLP

Editor,

Apropos the write-up by HH Mohrmen, "Job Creation through Entrepreneurship Development" (ST June 19, 2017) one cannot agree in toto that the Basin Project is a success. I beg to differ with his views and observations that the project has benefitted the rural areas of West Jaintia Hills in many forms. The impact of the project and the changes it has brought about in helping people develop and adapt to new employment avenues is vague. In most parts of East Khasi and East Jaintia Hills where I have met with

people, the project has not helped the community in exploring new employment avenues. Tourism is one sector that still lacks a one-people policy that should benefit the local community and not outsiders.

The convergence that the writer speaks of is a misnomer and even securing a bank loan is a struggle for rural people as the managers of nationalised banks do not encourage lending and cite various rules which exclude people from borrowing. Perhaps a survey would indicate up to what extent the IBDLP has impacted the villages and what changes the project has brought about.

Yours etc...  
Dominic S. Wankhar  
Shillong

**Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.**

*"A friend is one that knows you as you are, understands where you have been, accepts what you have become, and still, gently allows you to grow."*

--- J. G. Ballard

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 310

SHILLONG, THURSDAY, JUNE 22, 2017

### Punjab's turn for loan waiving

PUNJAB is considered the granary of India and yet it faces an agrarian crisis. Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has announced the most familiar solution which is farm loan waiver. The Congress had won the assembly elections on this promise. Rupees 15,000 crore has been estimated in the current budget to be the amount of the waiver. The loan on the other hand is estimated to be rupees 24,000 crore. It seems that the state government has not wised up to the magnitude of the crisis. In any event, the loan waiver will not stem the agrarian rot. Punjab is one of the richest states in India in terms of per capita income. It also has the highest agricultural productivity. At the same time there has been intense use of resource and as a result farmers have been made more vulnerable than in other states to changes in prices of agricultural produce and weather pattern. Government policies in the state in the past have been counter-productive and there has been no improvement since the new Congress government took office. The government in the state is also committed to provide free electricity to farmers but that applies to all states. Punjab is afflicted by the worst water crisis and ground water is over exploited. Power reform instead of power subsidy is the answer.

The loan waiver will benefit a little more than a million farmers the majority of whom own up to 5 acres. But Punjab needs greater opportunities in manufacturing and services while the reliance of the farm population on serials has to reduce. A loan waiver will enable the government to repay its large debt. But then education will be starved of funds.

### LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

### Slow progress of sports department

The Estimates Committee of Parliament has deplored the "lackadaisical" approach of the Department of Sports in taking steps to bring sports under the concurrent list of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.

In its 72<sup>nd</sup> report on action taken by the government on the recommendations contained in its 65<sup>th</sup> report, the Committee said it was pained to note that even after

a lapse of more than a year, no specific steps had been taken in this direction and the matter was stated to be still under consideration.

Deplored this attitude, the Committee urged the department to get the views of state governments expeditiously and endeavour to complete the necessary exercise with due promptitude.

# Teaching as a mission for building lifelong foundation

By Aristotle Lyngdoh

There has been much talk and discussion on how to improve the system of education in our state and also to provide quality education that will cater uniformly to the educational development of all the children of the state. This is in fact, the need of the hour in order to bring our children at par with the rest of the country which as of now is below the national standard. The other criteria that reflects the quality of education in our state is the difficulty faced by the students from the MBOSE background to compete and qualify in the top category of the National Entrance Examinations like JEE or NEET etc., which are compulsory these days for admission to any technical and specialized course.

On the other hand it is very sad and disappointing to see that as a state we do not have a specific and precise curriculum of our own except a syllabus that we often see in some textbooks of the State Board. Therefore when the teaching job is reduced to completing certain chapters for a particular standard, then it become simplistic and anyone can be a teacher just to complete the syllabus, irrespective of whether or not students have gained understanding and learned anything. The situation is more horrible to imagine for those in rural areas where primary teachers are either matriculate or Calls XII passed only. The statistics compiled by ASER shows a very disappointing situation where only 65% of the students in Std 3-5 can read a Std 1 text and only 34% can do subtraction. In Std 6-8 only 70% can read a Std 2 text and 19% can do division. Further, as per MBOSE website, in 2016 the total number of students who appeared in SSLC examination is 50,126 (both regular & private) but the pass percentage is only 54%. Coming to the

HSSLC segment of the same year, 21,083 students appeared in Arts stream but only 1,198 secured first division. Yet another disturbing factor will arise because only 2184 students are enrolling in Commerce stream and 3586 students in Science stream (figures as per 2016 data). What about the rest and what will they do? Therefore, there is an urgent need to reform the educational system of our state beginning from the grass root level.

From the above figures, it is apparent that the numbers of technical and specialized professionals are declining over the years and this is not a good sign for the state where there is already a shortage of local technical experts. If the situation continues, then the gap therein has to be filled by experts from outside. The sole reason for this huge slide of students towards Arts stream is probably because they have failed to grasp the basics of foundation right from primary level. This is a major deterrent for the students to acquire understanding about the principles and concept of the subject matter as they go to higher classes. Further, from this category maximum numbers of them will end up teaching here and there just for the sake of getting a livelihood. If this is the case, which is in fact a real phenomenon, then one can imagine what sort of foundation will be imparted to the children of the upcoming generation?

When parents send their child to school for the first time, they have high expectations and dreams that their son or daughter will one day achieve something significant. But as their time in school drags on most students end up earning labels of being less-intelligent or dull or unfit for the course of studies until they finally

drop out. This thing should not have happened if proper and clear foundations are imparted to them in the way it should be, by dedicated and trained professionals.

Only if teaching is a vocation can the mission be accomplished. But if it is just another option for livelihood, then one teacher will be doing incalculable harm to batches of students for 30 years or more of teaching tenure. Only when teaching is a calling can the teacher sustain himself/herself through every situation and trial irrespective of the different types of pupils he/she handles. Building and imparting foundation or making the children understand a topic is not confined to the four walls of the classroom. Learning and comprehension can happen in various learning environments and here comes creative teaching and imaginative pedagogy. I am amazed to learn about the techniques of one guy from South India who was teaching arithmetic for primary level in one of the KVS School (Kendriya Vidyalaya) here in our state. He used a simple technique while teaching the concept about ascending and descending numbers by taking them to the staircase. He demonstrated with numbers on the steps that climbing the steps is ascending and coming down the steps is descending and in five minutes the whole class comprising students from the Khasi, Garo, Bihari, Nepalese and Bengali communities could clearly understand the concept without any difficulty. Here I realized that language is not a barrier but the lack of techniques is what one should be more worried about.

Yes there may be talented and gifted teachers but they are only a handful and that too after long experience. But in general the creativity of a person cannot just emerge unless that person is well trained and exposed to various learning environments. Building a strong foundation right from childhood when the child is at the formative years and the mind is receptive is something that our leaders in the government have never thought of or prioritized. If we can come up with a new education policy, then building a strong foundation right from the pre-primary and primary school levels should be a major thrust of the policy, and I am sure that by the time these kids complete the tenth or twelfth standard they can easily clear any type of competitive entrance examinations with good ranking.

It is high time the society realizes that teaching is a specialised profession and not just an employment avenue or a livelihood. It is the teacher's onus and privilege to make the children more enlightened and equipped with the life skills to handle their own future. With the present form of education, school children are structured to imitate and copy what that has been dictated just so they can pass their exams. The opportunity for them to reason and express their learning in a constructive environment is totally absent. Another challenge that may create further confusion in the learning-teaching atmosphere is when there is an attempt to introduce religious and philosophical doctrines pertaining to a particular religion. I don't think this is appropriate to impose philosophical doctrines to school children because education and monastery or shrines are totally two different aspects of life. Education is interactive and productive while religion is one-sided and personal.

turned insanely violent and brutal after India loses a cricket match? But how can a body which can't even "control" the cricket management ever influence the audience who are already hooked to the game?

The other bane of cricket is the huge corporate investment in the game and the pernicious match fixing which cannot be ruled out. The secret nexus between the "bookies and cricket players," is no joke? How can the audience tolerate a game where the integrity of the players and the game itself is doubtful? The players whom we adore as our icons are trading their souls for filthy lucre behind the pitch. I think no one disagrees that the IPL stinks big time!

Funnily the media touts Virat Kohli as a role model for the youth and many fans idolize him. But soon after India lost the match to Pakistan some of his ardent admirers cracked in rage and called him names! Is cricket then a fair game?

Yours etc.,  
Salil Gawai,  
Shillong-2

Letters to the Editor must have the full name, address and contact number of the writer, even if they are sent by email. Only letters with the requisite details will be published.

## Why I Will Not Say "Bharat Mata ki Jai"

By Ananya S Guha

If anyone beholds me for not saying, "Bharat Mata Ki Jai" I will of course not live to see the situation. But the temerity of this statement by a business man in the garb of a god man is worth appreciation. After all his innocence as a yogi is petering out! His true colours as a man in the corporate world are being revealed. He needs to reassert himself by mindless talk. Obviously he has not heard Arun Shourie's recent interview in NDTV on his latest book when he called the current crop of god men in the country, business magnates, soulless and masquerading as mendicants.

But the statement also highlights the false sense of nationalism, which is being bandied today in the country. The nationalism is this: Hindu and Hindi. It is a structure which is being built meticulously, but without any tectonic skills or craftsmanship. It is simply to spout malfeasance against the other, those who do not spout fidelity to your imagination of religious cultism. Secondly the beheading part! The aggressive nature of the expression is murderous. Any deviation from it can lead to beheading. It is

very people oppose tooth and nail.

Perhaps enough has been said on nationalism in the recent past. But more will be said as we rework its definitions and viewpoints. Perhaps the latest word in its vocabulary is patriotism. Patriotism would mean that yoga is a world culture, that Sanskrit should be taught, learnt, vocalised and memorised. Patriotism would be to chant Bharat Mata, invoke Ram and Hanuman. Patriotism would also mean to say that the national movement had no terrorists but freedom fighters. Of course the terrorists were freedom fighters. But one has to be very careful with words and expressions. Not with behaviour though. Beating up people at airports and throwing things at people only show how we have imbibed our ancient culture! The rule of lawlessness is nothing new, but the rule of the jungle perhaps is.

Since the 80s, a series of god-men have been hoodwinking the country in the name of mass following, thereby amassing wealth and practising libertine ways. Since the westerner also gave a fillip to such gratification, it enhanced

**The nationalism is this: Hindu and Hindi. It is a structure which is being built meticulously, but without any tectonic skills or craftsmanship. It is simply to spout malfeasance against the other, those who do not spout fidelity to your imagination of religious cultism. Secondly the beheading part! The aggressive nature of the expression is murderous. Any deviation from it can lead to beheading.**

amazing that a public figure can make such a statement and get away with it. Thirdly is the caricaturing of the word 'Mother.' The mother country, the cow as mother, the mother goddess which is the equivalent of the country is an apotheosis cleverly raised by pseudo culture mongers. The bogey is only too obvious; the desire to be applauded and whip fanaticism. We now can say what we want, so I'm saying it. I don't mind being beheaded, because I am not going to say, "Long Live Bharat Mata". Nor am I going to say "Long Live India". That is because I am not sure how long India will continue to live. It's finery are being cut, wedges are driven within it, religion is mingled with the worst type of politics, myth is confounded with history, its historical footage is being mauled. How can it survive?

Violence cannot be the answer to dissent. The statement is false, malicious and murderous, holding all possibilities for orchestrated violence. And who says it? A god man, who preaches not the occult but the clarity of the yoga, who exhorts his followers towards physical, mental and spiritual balance! But is he not imbalanced now? Perhaps no one is taking him seriously, not even some of the brigades to which he belongs. But what is sad is the overweening 'influence' of such fascist statements getting control over our psyches, or trying to do so. The word beheading smacks of viciousness and disorderliness, if one is to oppose dictats. It also shows brute force and the resurgence of medieval values. It takes morality in its own hands, much like Islamic regimes, which these

their 'reputation'. These god-men and women travel in luxury cars, wear luxury dresses and eat luxury food. Each one of them look well enabled. Later on some of course entered politics, some were charged with the most heinous of crimes. If molesting has become the order of the day, we have in some of them our most distinguished precursors. Forgotten were the likes of Ramakrishna. Our new god man is tech-savvy, an industrialist by profession and corporate by culture. Of course he invokes godliness, perhaps to the ungodly or to the poor citizen wanting to escape from a brutalised society. In the process our god-man is the new avatar, a shining piece of illegitimate light. He can talk about anything from saints to sinners. Tell him life's problems and hey presto he will talk about the art of living- not its science.

Now the new fangled nationalism cannot escape their clutches. India is Mother. The cow is Mother. Not Father of course. There is no gender discrimination. The cow cannot be killed. The goat, the hen and the wolf can. India has no diverse races, only one which came and started chanting hymns. God forbid they are not heard today, otherwise why should there be so many rapes and killings? Is not the Mother hurt, pained and wounded?

But no, it is the purity of the country, its ancient wisdom which must be sanctified. Wasn't there theft, killing and swindling in ancient times? Were there no poor and rich, the exploiter and the exploited? What was so untarnished then?

I love you my beloved country but I don't want to be beheaded for doing so.

### TO THE EDITOR

### Misplaced comment!

Editor,  
Apropos the letter by Michael N Syiem captioned, "Stupid comment on broken marriages" (ST June 20, 2017) may I take this opportunity to clarify and clear all misgivings that it was not Mr VGK Kynta who commented on the subject of counseling of families under verge of break down. Rather it was I who made that particular comment. I know that Mr Kynta is least interested in responding to any individual statements, hence this clarification. Perhaps Mr Syiem has focused his attention only on this esteemed daily and not the other local dailies, including the electronic media, otherwise he would have refrained from casting aspersions on Mr Kynta. Be that as it may, perhaps this issue needs to be deliberated in an open panel discussion on the subject - "Meghalaya Compulsory Registration of Marriage Act 2012 vis a vis broken homes and marriages.

Yours etc.,  
Rev Thanlijoy  
Diengdoh,  
Via email

### We need roads, not railways!

Editor,  
Election is round the

corner and thorny issues are out in the open again. One such issue is the introduction of railway lines in Khasi Hills, the notorious Byrnihat railway connection. Railways bring development no doubt but many times with a heavy price. Influx of immigrants is bound to happen on a large scale. This is a genuine concern of the KSU and of the Khasi people at large. Knowing that Meghalaya has porous borders on all sides, the coming of railways will only add fuel to the fire. Some time ago, a large group of beggars arrived at Bhairabi station in Mizoram with the intention of getting into Aizawl perhaps. Fortunately, the Mizoram authorities managed to deport them back. Perhaps it is much easier to identify outsiders in a state like Mizoram where the indigenous population is still dominant. But in a state like Meghalaya and in places like Byrnihat or even Nongpoh where the population is no longer homogenous, it is next to impossible to identify outsiders even if they arrive in big numbers. The railways will only facilitate the inflow of outsiders.

Our inter-state border police are already struggling with checking the influx brought by road, how will they ever succeed to do such task with the thousands of outsiders brought by the railways. In my opinion, interstate

railway connections is not going to serve the interest of Meghalaya. Instead, road connectivity should be widened and improved and the Shillong Airport should be upgraded at the earliest.

The idea of the CM to have a railway connection between Shillong and Sohra would be a preferable option. A fancy train to ferry tourists to and fro would enhance tourism and attract more visitors to the state. The option of cable car networks could be another attractive idea. The argument of facilitating transport of goods by railways does not hold water because Guwahati station is so close to Shillong and with the four-lane GS road, the goods can easily and quickly be transported to Shillong by road transport. Better road connectivity and not railways is the need of the state. So it is a useless exercise for the government to try to get railway connections. The idea should be scrapped and this issue be put to rest once and for all.

Yours etc.,  
Barnes Mawrie sdb  
Via email

### Cricket - a fair game or a farce!

Editor,  
The purpose of all sports is to recreate and rejuvenate the human person and to add joy and happiness to

life. Sports also help build a sense of bonhomie and keep everyone in good spirits. Sports fans who enjoy the event should also feel they are de-stressing and not belligerent and hateful. Of course, every sport increases our efficiency as it lubricates the mind, and helps us to be focused on what we do. But these days, particularly when watching the never-ending cricket matches, we notice that the surge of negativity overwhelms many of us.

True, the cricket audience in India has for decades been so hyped up by the media that a good many have become excessively obsessed with this game. Obsession with particular sense objects is itself harmful. Needless to say, the obsessive attention given to cricket has undermined many other games such as football and hockey. Just imagine how countless fans particularly our youth are wasting their precious time being glued to the TV screen to watch overstretched cricket matches. Maybe over 80% of their minds are overtaken by "chitchat" and the attachment cricket. One game ends and immediately another begins! Have they not adversely affected the academic pursuits or careers of millions youth? For many crazy fans everything is relegated to the backburner during the cricket season. I am an

*"Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I'm not sure about the universe."*

--- Albert Einstein

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 311

SHILLONG, FRIDAY, JUNE 23, 2017

### Kumble vs Kohli

ANIL Kumble has decided to step down from the office of India's cricket coach. He has had a rift with Captain Virat Kohli. It is reminiscent of the longstanding rift between Coach Greg Chappel and Captain Sourav Ganguly. Such stalwarts of Indian cricket as Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly and VVS Laxman selected Kumble and even gave him an extension. How did the bitterness arrive? The coach may have differences of opinion with some members of the team but there should be implicit trust between the captain and the coach for great performances on the field. In the circumstances of there being lack of trust between the captain and the coach, the coach has eventually to bow out. The Indian Cricket Board is largely responsible for the unseemly conflict. It decided to choose Kumble for the office of coach in place of the vastly popular Ravi Shastri. That sowed the seeds of discontent. The team manager, it has to be borne in mind, plays a vital role in bringing about good understanding between the skipper and the coach.

It seems that not merely Kohli but also other players of the Indian team had grievances against the way Kumble functioned. Kohli for his part should learn how to get along with the new coach to be appointed. He cannot go on adopting an aggressive attitude. The captain is the sheet anchor of the Indian team and should know his responsibilities. At the same time the new coach should learn from the Kumble episode while not being puttee in the hands of the captain.

### LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

### 18 killed in orgy of violence in Punjab

An indefinite curfew was clamped on the walled city of Amritsar today after an orgy of terrorist violence claimed eighteen lives in Punjab. One terrorist was also killed in an encounter with security forces near Haipur village in Jalandhar district this morning. All but four of the killings took place in Amritsar district where a dozen terrorists raided a house in Jagdev Kalan village and shot dead twelve members of a family. The villagers came to know of the killings only this morning. Indefinite curfew was clamped on the entire walled city of Amritsar and Durgiana Mandir area this afternoon in view of tension, official sources said. The sources said a funeral procession turned violent and a police party accompanying it. The procession was in connection with the funeral of a man who was shot down by terrorists yesterday near Dabbarji on the Amritsar Taran-Taran road in Amritsar district. Police opened fire injuring two people. Terrorists shot dead two people at Kaonka Kalana village in Ludhiana district last night, police said. Police said two terrorists forced their way into one Veer Singh's house and escaped. Later, the terrorists gunned down a panchayat member Pal Singh in his house and escaped. One person was gunned down by four terrorists outside his home at village Balpur last night, a report from Batala said. Police identified the victim as Mr Apar Singh (35). Police said the terrorists called him out of his house and shot him dead. In another incident in Amritsar six terrorists shot dead a Communist Party of India (CPI) activist. Tilak Raj and injured his party colleague in village Khadar Sahib, police said. Police recovered two bodies in Naurangabad village this morning, police believed that the two were killed by terrorist. One terrorist was killed in an encounter with security forces near Haripur village this morning, a report from Jalandhar said.

Police claimed to have recovered 12-bore gun along with 12 cartridges from the person of the slain terrorist.

#### V.P. Singh asks P.M to own Bofors scandal

Former Defence Minister V P Singh today urged Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi to own the responsibility in the Bofors scandal. Addressing a public meeting here this evening Mr Singh said it was a pity that the Prime Minister had to make a statement in Parliament to clarify that neither he nor any of his family members had taken commission in the deal. Justifying his action to the Prime Minister, Mr Singh said the foreign Government's help could be sought to arrest General. Vaidya's killer, there was nothing wrong in "my taking foreign assistance to book economic offenders." Mr Singh said the fact that the Prime Minister had announced an inquiry into the eamassing of wealth by Ajiabh Bacchan in Switzerland showed that there was a case against him.

#### Splinter Janata party to retain identity

The national executive of the truncated Janata Party today decided to maintain its identity and elected Mr Inubhai Patel as its president. A meeting of the national executive resolved to maintain the identity of the party at all costs and take steps to strengthen the organization. The president was authorized to oppose the Janata Dal application for transfer of the party symbol and take necessary steps to occupy the office. Taking to newsmen here. Besides Mr Patel, other members who attended the meeting were former Karnataka Power Minister Mr Deva Gowda, Syed Shahabuddin, Dr Subramaniam Swamy and Dr Sorajini Mahaisi. Mr Patel said the Janata Dal had forcibly occupied centre of office of the Janata Party and steps would be taken to remove them from that premises.

# Reclaiming Education: From Whom and How?

By Patricia Mukhim

The one-day deliberation on Reclaiming Education, organized by ICARE recently threw up some interesting facets on education in Meghalaya. For one, the state has been functioning without a curriculum. It only follows a syllabus. Now ordinary mortals would tend to believe that there's not much difference between a curriculum and a syllabus. That's where experts come in. Dr Flourette Dkhar, Associate Professor, North East Regional Institute of Education (NERIE) clarifies that a curriculum essentially lays down the vision and mission of education that a particular state outlines for itself but drawing the larger objectives from the national curriculum framework (NCF) of the country. A syllabus only outlines the chapters that are to be completed from each subject!

If one were to encapsulate problems that threaten to derail education in Meghalaya then one would think of this quote by Einstein, "We cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them." In education it is somewhat more complex. The classroom is designed as if everyone is of the same size, has the same needs, can grasp and understand complex problems at the same time as if they have the same intelligence, same mental breadth and same confidence levels. What about the quiet ones who won't speak up, are unable to understand an algebraic problem and go home with a load of anxiety, cannot sleep well, lose appetite and go through a lot of internal trauma. Can the teacher in a class of 35-40 or even more at times, be able to recognize such problems in one or two students in the class? Isn't it more common for a teacher to enter a classroom and 'teach,' using a monologic, one-way, top-down, talk method and expect the students to have understood it all?

Yes we have technology today but those tools are being used in 19th and 20th century learning environments. The pedagogy, teaching styles and classroom management techniques have not changed much since we were in school. Education in our case has never been about the students; it has always been about the teachers. It is not learner-centred even today. Hence we have images of larger than life teachers, many of whom were so intimidating, so patronizing and so insulting at our inability to

understand, what for many, is a simple problem, that many students just dread their classes. That age is over. Today students confront their teachers and question them, often at great risk of being called rebels. That's because the 21st century student does not need knowledge from the teacher. Knowledge is a commodity that can be downloaded. What the student needs are life skills. He/she needs to know how to deal with the world outside the classroom - a life that is no longer controlled by the school environment, where there is no supervision. The internet can't tell them what lessons they can learn from reading of World War II and its brutalities. That's where the teacher comes in - to bring the human aspect of teaching.

Today students need space for research, for independent and critical thinking skills. These are the very things we should be encouraging in our learners but which our syllabus does not tell us to. These days we speak a lot about collaborative or cooperative learning and there are visible results that students learn better in small groups where they discuss and come up with several answers to one problem. Unfortunately, when we were growing up if we dared to talk to each other in the classroom especially during examinations it was called 'cheating'

How a student deals with and confronts problems in his/her life is something that the education system has been unable to teach. Are students challenged to solve problems through a series of reasoning techniques? Is there space in the classroom for that? Isn't that what the curriculum should include? Students need a higher level reasoning and research skills, not the "drill and kill," variety that has gone on for donkey's years.

Primary education is the biggest challenge for Meghalaya. Speakers at the conference who have experience of how village schools function speak of the large scale corruption unleashed by politicians themselves who appoint unqualified people just because they are influential vote-catchers. These unqualified charlatans then sub-let their teaching post to someone even lesser

qualified than themselves and then we expect these to educate our children? How immoral are those who steal away the dreams of these children even before they can dare to dream big! Why do we blame these kids when they don't have the appetite to come to school or when they drop out of such cruel factories that murder the mind and are called classrooms!

Mr Toki Blah of ICARE said that primary school students are the least empowered lot because they have no vote and are too small to be used for proxy voting. Their parents are too scared and powerless to speak up against the school administration or against specific teachers so they carry their pain in their souls. It is time for the community and for community based organisations to hold the schools to account. Tribal societies are called that because of the strong community ties. Of what use if the community if people have to suffer the tragedy of badly run schools, individually and silently?

We have blamed the government enough for the failure of education but have we really done anything as a society/community? No we haven't! Parents are deeply upset by the weight of the school bag. They are traumatized that their 11 or 12 year old has to complete their homework up to 11 pm at night when they should be sleeping and having sweet dreams! A parent speaking at the conference pointed to Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which says that every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. Our education system has stolen leisure from the child!

Today we are doing everything wrong; pushing the child to achieve and that achievement is all about marks! Parents grieve that their child is "weak" at Maths and we know what that means, don't we for we ourselves know no better than to push our kids into an unrelenting, destructive and brutal rat race. Most of us want our kids to achieve what we ourselves never could. Is that really fair? But when will parents learn? They won't learn until the system changes itself and learning is made into a joyful activity and there are many more avenues for children to

opt from than just the conventional courses that are so mechanically designed and which have become sacred cows by now! And also obsolete!

In an article on the number of things that are obsolete in the 21st century classroom (author unknown), the writer lists out computer rooms, isolated classrooms, not having wifi, banning phones and tablets, teachers that don't share what they do, schools that don't have Facebook or Twitter, unhealthy cafeteria food, starting school at 8 o'clock for teenagers, traditional libraries, putting kids in the same class because they are born in the same year, standardized tests to measure the quality of education etc. Imagine how many obsolete things we still consider as important to our children's lives!

Tony Wagner, the author of the Global Achievement Gap says: "Isolation is the enemy of improvement". He proposes open classrooms where teachers should be able to walk in and learn from each other, parents should visit often, with so called Extra Open Schooldays (where all parents are encouraged to visit classrooms anytime during the day). Isolated classrooms are therefore obsolete. Further, Wagner says teachers who work silently, don't tweet, blog and discuss ideas with people around the world are obsolete. Teachers are no longer working locally but globally and it's their job to share what they do and see what others are doing. If a teacher is no longer learning then he/she shouldn't be teaching other people.

Coming back to a public movement for education in Meghalaya it is time to push for such a cause with our governments and politicians and to root out unqualified teachers who have been pushed into the classrooms through the backdoor. Isn't it ironic that teachers can come out into the streets for their own welfare but they have never, ever, spoken up on behalf of their students and their incapacities! But how can they do so, when teachers themselves are largely the bane of education! I salute those teachers with a passion for the vocation but such are a tiny number, Alas!

Ram Nath Kovind's low profile suits Modi

## NDA candidate the ideal saffron soldier

By Amulya Ganguli

The standard explanation for the BJP's choice of the virtually unknown Ram Nath Kovind for the President's post - a rerun of the 2007 "Pratibha who?" episode relating to Pratibha Patel - is his Dalit background.

It is believed that the selection of a Dalit for the highest constitutional position in the country will help to bridge the gulf that has developed between the BJP and the community ever since the bright young scholar Rohith Vemula's suicide in Hyderabad central university following his confrontation with the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the increasingly aggressive student wing of the saffron brotherhood.

The recent violent stand-off between the Dalits and Rajputs in Saharanpur, U.P., and the earlier lynching of four Dalits who were skinning a dead cow in Una, Gujarat, have also alienated the community from the BJP.

It cannot be said for certain whether the tokenism of a Dalit President will lead to a dramatic

such as this, the unassuming Kovind will fit in perfectly.

It is not impossible that the choice of the modest lawyer is the result of the lesson which Modi learnt from the nomination of the far more pushy Yogi Adityanath as the U.P. chief minister. It is not that Yogi has done anything untoward. In fact, he has been saying and doing the right things by reining in the ghar-wapsi and love jihad brigades and telling the gau-rakshaks and the anti-Romeo squads not to take the law into their own hands. Even then, he remains a polarizing figure because of what he said and did in the past.

Kovind's past, in contrast, is nondescript, which is why he does not seem to have any critics even among the BJP's political opponents. The Bihar chief minister, Nitish Kumar, had no hesitation, therefore, in endorsing his candidature, evidently because he had no run-ins with the former governor as,

*At the same time, since Kovind's RSS credentials are foolproof, his ascent marks another step forward in the Hindutva lobby's conquest of the commanding heights of the Indian polity. The BJP's parliamentary success was followed by the expected appointment of saffron apparatchiki in academic institutions such as the Indian Council of Historical Research and the Indian Council of Social Science Research.*

transformation of the present fraught relations between the Dalits and the BJP. If such gestures had worked, then the presence of Dalits like Ramvilas Paswan, Thawar Chand Gehlot and Ramdas Athawale in Narendra Modi's ministry would have had a soothing effect on Dalit sensitivities.

If it hasn't, the reason is that the BJP has not been able to shed its image of being a Brahmin-Bania party, made worse in recent times by its palpable hauteur. Kovind's elevation, therefore, may well turn out to be a futile endeavour in trying to win the hearts and minds of the Dalits.

However, he will be useful in other respects. As a moderate, he will be in tune with Modi's sab ka saath, sab ka vikas pitch unlike, say, the more hawkish Tripura governor, Tathagata Roy of the BJP, who said that those who attended Yakub Memon's funeral should be kept under surveillance as they were potential terrorists and reminded everyone who cared to listen about Shyama Prasad Mookerjee prognostications about a Hindu-Muslim civil war.

Moreover, Kovind is unlikely to act as assertively as another President chosen by the BJP, viz. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, did as when he sent the Office of Profit Bill back to the cabinet. Kovind's low key persona will also not upset the balance in the government of "two and a half men", as the disgruntled former BJP minister, Arun Shourie, described the present dispensation.

However, Shourie may have exaggerated the numbers running the government, for it is really a one-man show where the other one and half men - presumably Amit Shah and/or Arun Jaitley or Rajnath Singh - are not of much account. In an arrangement

for instance, the Puducherry chief minister, V. Narayanswami, is having with the Union territory's lieutenant-governor, Kiran Bedi, who was called a thanedar by her critics at the time of the Delhi elections.

At the same time, since Kovind's RSS credentials are foolproof, his ascent marks another step forward in the Hindutva lobby's conquest of the commanding heights of the Indian polity. The BJP's parliamentary success was followed by the expected appointment of saffron apparatchiki in academic institutions such as the Indian Council of Historical Research and the Indian Council of Social Science Research. Now, the capture of the palace on Raisina hill can well be regarded as the party's crowning glory.

The manner of Kovind's selection was a reminder of Modi's penchant for springing surprises on an unwary public as demonetization and the choice of Yogi Adityanath showed. At the same time, it was less than ethical for the BJP to enact the charade of consulting the opposition parties on the presidential candidature in the "true spirit of democracy", as Venkaiah Naidu, who was one of the interlocutors, said. Since the party - or, rather, Modi - must have decided on Kovind some time ago, there was no need for the pretence of consultations.

In any event, what Kovind's selection confirms is that caste is becoming a major factor in choosing the President, dispensing with the concept of an eminent, non-political person become the head of state. That criterion would have been fulfilled if M.S. Swaminathan, the father of the Green Revolution, was chosen, as the Shiv Sena suggested. (IPA Service)

### TO THE EDITOR

### MHIS a Govt initiative, not an MLA scheme

Editor,  
As the State Government has revived the Meghalaya Health Insurance Scheme (MHIS) and fresh enrollment is under way, it seems some street smart politicians are trying to take undue advantage of it.

At Laban we heard repeated public announcements that the Scheme is in collaboration with Sanbor Shulla, the sitting local MLA. An impression is being created that the scheme has been co-sponsored by the legislator. I checked with an official of the Directorate of Health Service whether it was true that the scheme has been launched in "collaboration" with Shullai. The officer scoffed at such an idea and said that there are 60 MLAs in the State and it should logically mean that all MLAs have co-sponsored it. Far from it! No other MLA

is making any such claim. The truth is that the Scheme is being funded by the Government alone.

Therefore, it is a shameless attempt on the part of the MLA concerned to have tried to gain political mileage when elections are only a few months away. Such trickery will not erase the litany of accumulated public grievances about the lack of performance and the stark failure of the MLA in addressing the persisting civic problems in Laban in particular, not to speak of the rest of the constituency. I strongly demand that the MLA apologise to the electorate for trying to hijack a Government scheme for his own selfish political ends.

Yours etc.,  
B Wahlang,  
Shillong-4

### No-confidence motion without sting

Editor,

The much publicized No Confidence Motion (NCM) jointly submitted to the Chairman, Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council by UDP and HSPDP was a non-starter because it was immediately recalled by the movers due to lack of the magic numbers required to topple the PN Syiem PDF Executive Committee. This has boomeranged for both the parties. In fact, the parties have missed the opportune moment when Mr HS Shylla had appealed to them to withdraw from the EC of Syiem on February 22 when he had tabled the NCM against the EC. This has already embarrassed not only the MDCs but the MLAs and the rank and file of both the parties and it will have a telling effect for the parties during the coming elections.

On the other hand the Congress MDCs in the opposition benches were just observing the fun while quietly and eagerly waiting for the opportunity to support the motion when it is moved in the House. The only good thing about them

was that they remained low profile and kept quiet all along.

In fact, UDP and HSPDP and others who did not approve of the misuse and defalcation of funds from the Professional Tax of the KHADC, for conducting the Monolith festivals and perhaps many other irregularities, commissions and omissions which perhaps, were not reported in the media, should have supported the NC tabled by Mr. Shylla in February. Perhaps the UDP and HSPDP, have contemplated this move in view of the coming general elections as they see that PDF as a local political party, is a threat to their prospects and will intrude into their territories and eat into their vote bank. They should be extremely careful, lest they fall prey to the machinations of the Congress, as they are already accused of.

Yours etc.,  
Philip Marwein,  
Shillong-2

*"Be not afraid of greatness; some are born great, some achieve greatness, and others have greatness thrust upon them."*

--- Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

## The Shillong Times

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### Travesty of Justice!

THE Autonomous District Council (ADC) courts normally adjudicate on matters concerning the indigenous tribals of the state. But the wheels of justice in the ADC courts grind very slow. To add to that predicament, a judge of the Meghalaya High Court some years ago ruled that cases of rape by a tribal man of a tribal woman should also be transferred to the Council's courts for adjudication. The problem with a long drawn justice system is that jails become overcrowded. The Councils do not have their own prisons hence all the under-trial prisoners (UTPs) are lodged in the already overcrowded district jails. Thankfully a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in the High Court has brought this vexed matter to light. It is shocking to learn that a prisoner has been languishing in jail for twelve years without the District Council Court being held accountable. Now that the High Court has taken cognizance of the matter and has asked that pending case be heard on a day to day basis and for the member secretary of the State Legal Services Authority to submit the progress report of the case on the next hearing fixed for July 7, we can hope to see justice being better administered.

It is also disturbing to know that a public prosecutor of the Khasi Hills District Council Court was unable to attend to her duties on the plea of ill health for a long period and that no substitute was appointed in her place, which in turn has led to the delay in disposal of cases. The observation of the Meghalaya High Court that the KHDC court has demonstrated, "wanton unconcerned approach," tells its own story about the many layered justice system in this country. The District Council courts were created to dispense speedy justice to tribals who might not be able to afford legal fees over a long period of time. Also the District Council courts are to adjudicate based on customary laws but this purpose is defeated because of the undue delay in deciding the cases. The Meghalaya High Court has done the right thing by rapping the KHDC Court officials in the knuckles.

## Between 'tryst with destiny' and 'tryst with chaos' Moody's says any benefit of GST can come only over long term

By K Raveendran

The famous first freedom speech was made by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on the midnight of August 15, 1947. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley is all set to deliver the so-called second freedom speech on the midnight of June 30, 2017; or at least that must be the idea behind the chosen venue, Parliament House, and timing for the GST roll-out.

We know that the first one was followed by a blood bath, which devastated a nation, and the wounds of which have not yet been healed completely; the second one will most probably be followed by monumental confusion, the depth of which we currently have no idea about.

Arun Jaitley must be in a real predicament: he has to hone all his oratorical faculties to produce a 'Tryst with Chaos' speech which will hopefully replace or at least match Nehru's 'Tryst with Destiny' that conjured up romantic imageries about India for many generations and continues to inspire.

That is the most curious point that the country is looking forward to on the midnight of June 30. There is also tremendous curiosity as to whether Jaitley will add to the confusion or remove some part of it.

This confusion is no product of journalistic creativity, as some might try to make it out; it is actually on the authority of no less an entity than the rating agency Moody's, or the World Gold Council for that matter, or our own apex industry organisations.

There is confusion about the date, not of the speech, but the actual date of implementation, at least for some segments; there is confusion about how the rates would be applied; confusion about accounting for a service accessed by the head office of a company, for example, based in Delhi for its manufacturing unit in another state for calculating tax credit and so on.

The biggest confusion is about the mechanism to ensure that businesses do

not make undue profits by retaining the GST tax benefits with themselves instead of passing them on to the consumers. The constitution of a National Anti-profiteering Authority has been notified, but it leaves a plethora of issues unanswered as to how its rules and regulations would be implemented, whenever they are framed. It seems that everything has to evolve by itself, which will of course happen, but the question is whether it would evolve into the best possible arrangement and eliminate the chances of abuse, the hallmark of all our rules and regulations. The

council, it says large-scale changes to the current system are unlikely.

The World Gold Council, which analysed the implications of GST on gold, said the effect of the new tax is very complex. "The devil is in the detail when it comes to tax. While the GST rates have been announced, there are several areas where greater clarity is required," it said. The headline gold rate of 3 per cent on the face of it represents only a modest tax increase. But on deeper examination, the effect of the tax is more complex, it says. For instance, there are two important GST rates which will affect the industry. The first is the 3 per cent tax on

**The slowdown has heightened short-term risks to the economy, despite the successful passage of GST reform and robust consumption growth; because concerns around investment have intensified as investment declined 2.1 per cent in the March quarter following an abysmal 2016, when it declined 1.9 per cent.**

regulations often appear so confusing that one wonders whether they are deliberately made so, so that those who enforce them can interpret either way to fatten their own pockets.

Referring to the scheduled rollout of GST on July 1, rating agency Moody's says teething issues in implementing the change in a vast country like India will delay the benefits of the new tax regime reaching its intended beneficiaries. It further says that the corralling of rates into four buckets of 5 per cent, 12 per cent, 18 per cent and 28 per cent has itself been a source of confusion. For instance, renewable energy-based devices attract a 5 per cent tax, but inputs into production such as solar cells and modules are bunched in the higher bucket of 18 per cent. While acknowledging the possibility of further revisions by the GST

gold products, such as jewellery. In addition, there is an 18 per cent tax on services that will apply to firms and individuals providing manufacturing services across the gold supply chain.

Taking these two rates into account, the council's analysis of the supply chain indicates the effective tax rate consumers face could increase to between 13.5 and 14 per cent. But we often here that gold is taxed at 3 per cent under GST. The council also talks about the possibility of some consumers and jewellers trying to conduct transactions under-the-counter so that these do not get captured by GST.

Moody's is, in fact, showing the thumps down, saying the impact of GST will be neutral and any positive result may be expected only over the long term. Worse still, it says the current efforts are unlikely to rescue the Indian economy from growth deceleration, which is heightening the short term risks. These problems in the

economy are being obscured by the euphoria about the GST roll-out.

In a review by Faraz Sayed and the Asia-Pacific staff of Moody's Analytics, the agency says the Indian economy remains in a cyclical slowdown as of mid 2017. GDP growth decelerated sharply to 6.1 per cent in the March quarter, down from 7 per cent over the previous quarter.

Moody's is not prepared to blame demonetisation alone for the slower growth. Of course, it was one of the reasons. It only exacerbated but did not cause the slide in GDP growth, it says. It attributes the mid-2016 slowdown to a sustained slump in investment and exports. The slowdown has heightened short-term risks to the economy, despite the successful passage of GST reform and robust consumption growth; because concerns around investment have intensified as investment declined 2.1 per cent in the March quarter following an abysmal 2016, when it declined 1.9 per cent.

Investment has dropped from nearly 40 per cent to 30 per cent as a share of GDP since 2010. The trend is unlikely to improve over the coming year, as both corporate sector and public sector balance sheets are deteriorating. Moody's cites estimates that more than 15 per cent of all credit outstanding in India is non-performing. Moreover, lending to the corporate sector fell around 5 per cent year on year in early 2017, a trend that will likely persist for the remainder of the year.

It follows from all the above that the expectations of the GST roll-out performing miracles for the economy are simply unrealistic. It is a different matter that the GST euphoria is catching fire ahead of the 'historic' occasion that it is made out to be. (IPA Service)

## Internal Trade GST must end barriers

By Shivaji Sarkar

"India's internal trade GDP ratio at about 54 per cent is comparable to that in other large countries. India for nearly 70 years has affirmed and reaffirmed political 'idea of India', is de facto and de jure one economic India", observed Economic Survey 2016-17. "The inter-State trade is 1.7 times larger than the country's international trade of 32 per cent of GDP". India's trade profile is thus more similar to that of China at 1.6 times its international trade but less than the US, whose internal trade is 2.5 times its international.

The observation is significant on the eve of the ceremonial launch of Goods and Services Tax (GST) from the Central Hall of Parliament House. It means Indians have ingenuity and passion in integrating the country. Language or the political regionalism is not a barrier in internal trade expansion. Despite many hurdles more bureaucratic or rule-based the integration is amazing, the Survey notes.

It has come down heavily on impediments on truck movements on State borders "with their drivers haggling for official clearances or subject to extortion". The GST possibly is not addressing these issues as of now. It may gradually pave the way for smoother movement. But the new GST - one national tax with four different components or taxes - is ignoring it.

Ideally, it should have done away with highway and other tolls (municipal etc) despite multiplicity of road, parking and fuel cess on transport movement. "The consequent damages to trade and economic activity too have been extensively catalogued", the Survey notes. This is despite the fact the Indian society is extremely mobile, a dream of father of the Constitution Dr B R Ambedkar, for conveying a change.

But the costs of movement are about twice as great. The Survey attributes it to the current indirect taxes. It, however, does not refer to the inter-district police barriers and jumbling of vehicles at inter-city borders due to tolls levied by local bodies. The GST presently is not addressing the issue apparently. The Survey hopes that the GST "by ironing out oddities may normalise inter-State trade".

According to a recent report published by Transport Corporation of India (TCI) and IIM-K, such delays impose transaction costs of over Rs 1 lakh crore (\$21 billion) annually on India's businesses. In addition, it increases average transit times and makes supply chains inefficient. Enabling seamless movement of goods across India is, in fact, considered to be one of the most important aspects of GST-related reforms.

The rules of transport-related documentation and administrative procedures for checking and inspection of trucks, though usually unnecessary and often severe duplication, so far has not received attention. The National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) says that it is digitalising the toll gates. It conceals the fact that the tolls are additional and unnecessary tax as already several kind of road taxes are levied on truck, bus and other transport movement. It is an additional cost. Each toll gates, despite supposed electronic control, adds to travel time and creates barriers.

With one GST, check posts at State borders need to be completely eliminated. Presently, a plethora of forms are needed to be filled up to satisfy the State Road

Transport authorities and also pay an additional road tax, in some cases even with a national permit. The system of inspectorate - that thrives of what the Survey notes as extortion - has to be done away with. This apart, the police and RTO posts levy "taxes" amounting to about Rs 28,000 crore a year.

The GST Network (GSTN) that has already come out with an IT architecture has to broaden it to include the goods movement. Instead of each time demanding a hardcopies of invoice and forms, it should create an automatic ID to end the discretion of inspecting officials. A system of trust has to be built.

The official system is based on the concept of mistrust. The human element is missing in it. The distrust apparently is the creation of the not so honest officials so that extortions can go on. Even the GST has to be widened beyond taxes to creating a system of having seamless movement across States.

The GST bill has provisions for substantive powers for stoppage and seizure of vehicles, which can be potentially abused. The nation has witnessed how the local police abuses these provisions leading to lakhs of vehicles being turned into junks at the police stations often just for the reason that someone has not paid the slush money. This is a severe penalty and soar business costs, causes uncertainty and hampers trade. Such clauses should gradually be out of the law books so that business and trade can thrive, jobs are created and the happiness that India aspires for may become real.

Yes, that would boom national and State GDP. There is no rationale for holding goods at police posts for non-payment of a small amount of tax. This can be sorted out in ways other than punitive. President of Global Trucks Anuj Kathuria at the recent zonal conference told the media he hoped that tolls and restriction on movement is set to go with GST and goods could move with ease. Such ease of rules has larger benefits. It not only makes movement easier, it also increases demand and boosts manufacturing at all levels including automobiles.

Removal of barriers can help the laggards. The Survey says the so-called laggards like Uttar Pradesh and Haryana are the m a n u f a c t u r i n g powerhouse not just Tamil Nadu and Gujarat. UP is a net exporter, and hence competitive in manufacturing. There is a strong correlation between a State's manufacturing share of State's GDP (GSDP) and its trade volumes (as per cent of GSDP). The manufacturing prowess of States is associated with higher inter-State trade.

The fundamentals of India's provincial trade compare with the best in the world - Canada, European Union and the US. These are governed by the four freedoms - allowing unfettered movement of goods, services, capital and people. India's internal trade data is understated as it does not include agricultural products.

So the road to progress in India is enormous provided the man-made barriers are eliminated. The GST in its present form is not the end. It would be a beginning of the real future reforms. One hopes the dream of one economic India would succeed with it. ---INFA

### TO THE EDITOR

#### Who is against railways?

Editor,  
The letter by Barnes Mawrie (SDB) (ST June 22, 2017) stating that Government should give up the rail project once and for all as it is a threat to the indigenous community is one of the most ethnocentric and parochial letters I have read in The Shillong Times. Since Mawrie has added the acronym SDB after his name indicates that he is a Catholic priest. My research informs me that he also teaches in the Sacred Heart Theological College. Being a priest he also enjoys a position of privilege over the captive audience he preaches to Sunday after Sunday. I am an academic myself so I want to ask Mawrie if he has conducted a survey to find out how many people actually want the railways and how many oppose it? He used the word "We" don't want railways in Meghalaya. Who is he including in that "We?" Is he a sympathizer of the pressure groups opposing the railways? It is ironic that in the same breath Mawrie pushes for the upgradation of Umroi airport for ease of travel. Obviously Mawrie, is one of the few in Meghalaya who can afford to travel by air. He therefore is the voice of the elite which also can afford air travel; not of the ordinary people for whom rail travel is still the cheapest. The rail project to Byrnihat is essentially for bringing essential

commodities and food grains from across the country to Meghalaya. This is expected to bring down the price of those commodities. But Mawrie astonishingly is propagating the idea that trucks should be used to bring goods to the State. Does he know how much money is extorted by different pressure groups from trucks carrying coal and other goods? Isn't that also the reason why every food item and essential commodity in Shillong is more expensive than anywhere else? These pressure groups fear that their incomes would be lost if trains were to carry all the goods? Or is Mawrie the voice of the truck owners association who will be the biggest losers if the railway comes to Meghalaya? One has serious doubts about the credentials of this priest who is feeding people with the fear of influx to scuttle a development project.

The problem with priests and religious is that they don't know the economics of life. They are served food on the table, have shoes on their feet and a vehicle to drive around and preach inanities. Let them get into the market economics and see if they can survive even for six months with the kind of underhand payments that have to be shelled out day in and day out by those who run small businesses and even by fish and vegetable vendors in Iewduh. To become a spokesperson of the community Mawrie must be backed by the community

and not only by followers of the Catholic faith. Does Mawrie have that following? Not everyone can claim to be a leader of the people. They must demonstrate that leadership by walking the talk. And if Mawrie really wants to be a leader then he should abandon the priesthood, join politics and fight elections.

Yours etc.,  
AS Syiem,  
Shillong- 8

#### We welcome Open Discussion on Marriage Act

Editor,  
We appreciate Rev. Thanlijoy Diengdoh for owning up responsibility for that comment fiasco on broken homes. That particular comment appeared only in the Shillong Times on June 14, 2017. We waited till the June 18, 2017 for any clarification/ rejoinder but since neither came, we had no other alternative but to write that letter on June 20, 2017 to clarify on that statement which elicited a reply from Rev T Diengdoh on the June 22, 2017. Had we not responded there would have been no clarification from Rev. Diengdoh and the 'stupid' comment would have been attributed to have been made by Mr. VGK Kynta. That aside, to be critical of a comment or statement does

not always imply casting aspersions on the person who made that statement.

However we welcome Rev. T. Diengdoh's suggestion for an open panel discussion on the subject- Meghalaya Compulsory Registration of Marriage Act 2012 vis a vis broken homes and marriages that will further enlighten the public on this very important subject.

Yours etc.,  
Michael N. Syiem  
Via email

#### The Kumble-Kohli episode

Editor,  
Apropos your editorial, "Kumble vs Kohli" (ST, June 23, 2017), the first and foremost task of a coach is to bond with the team. How much a coach is willing to become the immediate family of the Team along with its head is more important than his reputations as a player. A coach must win the trust of Team India captain as well as other members of the Team. A coach like a parent should let the players get all the attention and enjoy their success from the sidelines without trying to steal the show.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Kolkata

#### No room for dissent

Editor,  
In the backdrop of the

ongoing KSU stand against the move of the Govt. to bring the railway line into our land of Hynniewtrep, the Chief Minister Mukul Sangma has conveniently taken advantage of the ruling of the Hon'ble Meghalaya High Court which has outrightly outlawed the holding of any bandh etc., and a synchronous directive to the fourth estate to desist from publishing any news pertaining to purported agitation programmes to be chalked out by the agitators. In this context, I offer my unfeigned appreciation to our Hon'ble High Court and our incumbent Chief Minister for effecting a non-hindrance flow of daily chores where a veritable public bandh could have been invoked on the premise of the latest rail-line stir up.

Markedly, public strike, bandh, non-co-operation, Civil-disobedience etc., were essentially the inherent nationalist upsurge so effectively executed by our beloved freedom fighters under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, to vindicate their patriotic rights until the colonial powers left India lock, stock and barrel in 1947. Thankfully, the British rulers did not outlaw such application of agitations adopted by our patriots! Thus, such popular crusades have since become our unique legacies bequeathed on to us by our freedom fighters consisting of scientists, academics, legal luminaries and others

from different walks of life by way of non-violence.

Furthermore, taking into account some of the renowned academic institutes from home and abroad like JNU, Hyderabad Central University, IITs and Oxford, Cambridge, Chicago, Stanford, Princeton etc., respectively, we notice that whenever the students' inalienable rights therein are put in the bind, the latter, in a body, resort to protest by holding demonstrations, abstaining from attending classes etc., to partake in such dharnas. Notwithstanding students hullabaloo, these varsities in question have invariably retained their academic excellence which wholly goes to vindicate that discreet dissent, rebellion, demonstrations etc., are unquestionably the integral essence of democracy and the brutal police repression thereof makes the significance of Indian democracy a virtual misnomer thereby turning the same into an abject slave tethered under the chains of autocracy. Hence, putting two and two together, I am afraid that Meghalaya, under the extant dispensation is gradually tilting towards the frightful days of 1975, the darkest era of emergency in Indian democracy.

Yours etc.  
(Jerome K. Diengdoh)  
Shillong 2

# On A Different Journey

Jagriti Yatra is on a different trip, sparking creative enterprise & encouraging development. Carrie Loewenthal Massey reports

Jagriti Yatra is not your average train trip. This 15-day ride through 12 Indian cities, covering about 8,000km, embodies its name, which means "a journey of awakening."

"We are trying to awaken the spirit of entrepreneurship among the youth of the country, so they become job creators rather than job seekers," says Ashutosh Kumar, executive director at Jagriti Yatra. These youth can go on to "build solutions to the development challenges our nation is facing today," he adds.

Kumar participated in the International Visitor Leadership Program, the US State Department's exchange programme for professionals, on "Innovations for Social Entrepreneurs and Innovators" in 2013.

Headquartered in Mumbai, Jagriti Yatra is set up under a non-profit organisation Jagriti Sewa Sansthan, which is based in Deoria, Uttar Pradesh. The yatra has run annually since 2008, carrying about 450 youngsters, or yatris as Kumar calls them, on one train from December 24 to January 8.

The train starts from Mumbai, heading south to Hubballi and Bengaluru, on to Madurai and Chennai, Vishakhapatnam, Berhampur in Odisha, Rajgir in Bihar and Deoria in Uttar Pradesh, up to New Delhi, and then back through village Tilonia in Rajasthan and then to Ahmedabad.

In each location, the participants meet successful entrepreneurs, or role models, who share their stories of starting out and building their businesses, both in the private and NGO sectors, along with tips and advice for pursuing entrepreneurial goals. These entrepreneurs have expertise across seven sectors tied to development: agriculture; education; energy; health-care; manufacturing; water and sanitation; and art, culture and sports.

While the participants gain great exposure and knowledge from their off-train experiences, much of the learning and connection-building happen on the train itself. Days are filled with scheduled debates, presentations and conversations, along with events centered on art, music and poetry.

The journey gives participants a once-in-a-lifetime "experience to meet about 450 other entrepreneurs and collaborate with them; learn the



Jagriti Yatra participants enjoy their trip as well as gather experience for independent ventures. Jagriti Yatra aims to support 100,000 entrepreneurs by 2022

art of entrepreneurship from the role models of the country; understand the development challenges of the country; and build long-lasting solutions through enterprise methods," says Kumar.

For Jagriti Sewa Sansthan, the meaning of the word "enterprise" extends beyond business ventures to teaching, medical professions, social

work and art — anything that can fulfil the organisation's mission of encouraging development across "Middle India."

According to Jagriti Yatra's website, this segment encompasses 600 million Indian youth who are literate, have roofs over their heads and eat three meals a day, but are "without a sense of purpose".

challenges our country is facing," says Kumar. "There are no other academic or professional barriers."

Jagriti Sewa Sansthan tries to reduce financial barriers for the candidates by permitting different levels of contribution depending on their financial status. Almost 40 percent of them pay only the compulsory registration fee of Rs 6,000, says Kumar.

In addition to the yatra, Jagriti Sewa Sansthan also runs the Jagriti Enterprise Network and the Jagriti Enterprise Center. The network is meant to serve as an ecosystem to support young entrepreneurs from "Middle India". The centre "is a regional incubation programme to support small and medium-sized entrepreneurs through services like mentorship, market access and connection to funding", explains Kumar.

Jagriti Yatra aims to support 100,000 entrepreneurs by 2022, creating a million jobs in the process. The participants are helping it reach its goal through their successful ventures, which include a network of hostels operating in Bengaluru and looking to expand across India; a technology company striving to bring mobile products to underserved markets; a company working to make organic food more readily available while recognising the farmers that produce it; and a health care start-up that helps connect people with doctors and provide access to medicines.

Jagriti Yatra also inspired Patrick Dowd, a 2010-11 Fulbright scholar, to create the Millennial Trains Project in the United States.

The project, which had its inaugural voyage in 2013, encourages entrepreneurship in the millennial generation. It carries about 25 young people from Portland, Oregon, to New York to help them learn about the opportunities and challenges faced by entrepreneurs in the US.

Kumar sees Jagriti Yatra as a starting point for a network of entrepreneurs who can come together to "connect, collaborate and create" the programmes India needs to develop further. Its impact can be as far reaching as participants dare to dream and pursue their visions.

"Such a network of like-minded people has the potential to transform the landscape of the country and the entire world," he says. (SPAN-TWF)

## Call of the wild

(Continued from last week)

The Figo was like a fallen red flower whizzing through the green vegetation. The gravel road had tall trees around standing as sentinels. It had rained heavily just before we entered the park. There were puddles and the green and wet leaves glistened in the morning light.

We came to a part of the forest where the road was muddy and I thought of turning away. I got down and inspected the road. I found that a huge fallen tree and its dense foliage had blocked the real road and a temporary detour was made to bypass that blocked road.

The road ahead was uneventful except for pot-holes, pebbles, mud and water. We reached the bank of Manas river. It is an international boundary. The bank on which we were was India and the other side was Bhutan. It was beautiful and serene. The pebbles, the fast flowing river, the cold refreshing water all danced together and

## TRAVELLER'S DIARY

made the drive worthy.

Mathanguri was a good experience. We took off our shoes and immersed our feet in the cold water. After a while we observed an elephant on the opposite bank. My DSLR and 55-250 lens came handy and I got some beautiful shots of the elephant drinking water and spraying mud from the river bank on its body. As we travelled through the park we saw a peacock and few other birds. Our feet grew roots and we were mesmerised by the frolicking water dancing in the sunlight.

It was 1 pm when we started back. The return journey was not as arduous and by 2 pm we were back at the main entrance of the National Park. This was my first drive through a national park and the experience was etched in our memory. With loads of exciting experiences we bid adieu to Manas.

Later some people asked me as to what wildlife had I seen at Manas. They were curious to know if I had seen a tiger or a rhinoceros. I hadn't. Seeing tigers in the lush green jungles of the North East is next to impossible and to tell the truth I didn't wish to see one. Mosty areas of the park is in Bhutan and there also must be the core area. Travel by tourist is permitted only in the outer fringe and seeing a wild animal there at the fringe is extremely unlikely as the animals are wild by dint of their lack of contact with the humans.

We left with plans to return again someday in the future to spend more time in that river bank at the border of the happiest country of the world.

(Contributed by Saptarshi Majumder)

## We prudes feel assailed

These days people are willing to stand up for every subset of sexual identities — except for one group.

What about prudes? Our rights are trampled on every day.

Several times a week, something shocking comes on TV and my children shout "Not suitable for Dad!" and I have to race out of the room before kissing, pillow talk or worse appears on screen.

I was at a school drama once at which two performers on stage fell on each other passionately, causing everyone below the age of 12 in the audience, plus this columnist, to make a disgusted 'Eewwww' sound. Children have taste. They know that some things are great in public, others aren't.

Prudish adults exist too. This writer took his family to a poetry slam once which opened with a poem so pornographically detailed that half the adults in the audience booed out loud — although I have to admit the teens present grinned and took notes.

Prudes get a bad rap because we only make the news when one of us says something stupid. In Japan recently, a professor named Shigeaki Iijima explained why women could never be allowed to join the country's army: "In actual combat, if they are under attack from artillery shells or bombs, there is a chance their clothes could be blown off."

Clearly Mr Shigeaki does not understand the physics of bombs. But in his defence, weapons which seem to do nothing except damage female clothing pop up regularly in video games and anime cartoons, not to mention every action film ever made.

One of my colleagues claimed that someone had once actually developed a bomb that blew off clothes, leaving humans naked, but Google revealed he was

remembering a 1980 Maxwell Smart comedy movie called 'The Nude Bomb'.

Life as a prude is hard enough in Asia but it would be intolerable in pornography places such as Japan, North America or Europe, my colleague said.

Earlier this month the Canadian government praised pornography as it "allowed young people to learn about the different spectrum of sexual expression". This colleague, who is a Japanophile, said this implied that lucky Canadian children will be able to learn about things such as "tentacle sex" (do

NOT write and tell me what that is).

Will prudishness die out completely? "No," said one of my science correspondents. "Porn-loving societies see an increase in erectile dysfunction, a loss of interest in sex and negative birthrates. In contrast, prudish communities grow."

He showed me evidence. "Sex is going out of fashion" was the

headline of a US report summarising an academic study in August last year. A huge survey by The Lancet said people in the UK were having steadily less sex, and Swedish researchers found the same in their country.

He also had figures indicating that people in conservative, prudish, family-minded regions (Africa, South Asia) have a positive birth rate. This is somewhat ironic, since prudes are assumed to hate sex. In fact, we don't dislike it. We just would rather it was more hygienic, less visible and completely silent.

In fact, we don't even like talking about it, so I'll shut up here. Frankly, the whole subject makes me go ewwwwww.

(Nury Vittachi is an Asia-based frequent traveller. Send ideas and comments via his Facebook page)

## Gait laboratory at NEHU first in eastern region

Biomechanics, a comparatively new branch of science, is making waves in global medical sphere. The subject analyses the mechanics of movement and is applied in not only solving the puzzles of human gait but also in providing solutions to critical physiological problems.

The Department of Biomedical Engineering at North-Eastern Hill University is doing intensive research on biomechanics to contribute to medical treatment that will be affordable and accessible to the common man.

Dinesh Bhatia, Head of the Department of Biomedical Engineering, says though research on biomechanics started in India years ago, it was restricted only to defence and academics at premier institutes like Indian Institute of Technology. The work that Bhatia and his team are doing is the first of its kind in the eastern region that has the potential to open up new avenues in medical science.

The department recently established a Human Biomechanics and Gait Laboratory with funding from the Department of Science and Technology, Delhi, and NEHU.

This relatively new field covers a broad range of topics, including strength of biological materials, bio-fluid mechanics in the cardio-vascular and respiratory systems, material properties and interactions of medical implants, among other things.

"It is a vast field of study and comprises several sub-sections and we have specialised teams to research on different topics," says Bhatia.

The laboratory comprises eight channel wireless electromyography equipment to record simultaneous muscle activity, force plate with force platform to measure the different forces and joint torques procured from the US along with eight cameras 3 dimensional motion capture system with reflective marker system procured from Germany.

"This is the first of its kind laboratory set-up in the eastern part of the country,"



Bhatia (centre) with his team and (above) the Human Biomechanics and Gait Laboratory at NEHU

says Bhatia.

The professor says since football is a popular sport here and now that the northeastern clubs are showing their mettle, their performances can be enhanced by using biomechanics. "It is a common practice for coaches in western countries to use the new form of science in studying the movements of players. This helps them in preventing injuries. In India, cricket is the only sports where biomechanics is applied because there is more money in that sport. Other sports too should take up the methods for better performance," he adds.

Besides sports, there are other applications of biomechanics like in treating cerebral palsy and amputees.

"A person with moto-neuron disease will have gait patterns different from a normal person. By studying that, we can give solutions to the patient's problems," says Bhatia.

For example, transcranial-magnetic stimulation, a magnetic method used to stimulate small regions of the brain, helps in treating a patient of cerebral palsy. Bhatia says such modern methods of medical science are expensive but with intensive research by local scientists and made-in-India equipment, the treatment can become affordable for all in the near future.

However, with the Centre stopping fund flow for basic research, it is a challenge for researchers like Bhatia and his team to sustain. "There should be participation by industries as part of their corporate social responsibility. Biomechanics is a vast topic and requires years of experiment. But despite all odds, we are trying our best to take it forward," says the professor.

Also, intensive collaboration between researchers and medical experts is necessary. The NEHU department collaborates with doctors at North Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences for better results.

~ Nabamita Mitra

*Character is power; it makes friends,  
draws patronage and support and opens  
the way to wealth, honor and happiness.*

--- George Bernard Shaw

## The Shillong Times

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### Darjeeling Crisis

THE agitation in Darjeeling culminated in Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) President Bimal Gurung and 44 colleagues in the Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA) quitting a six year long association beginning in July 2011 with Gurung signing the Hill autonomy agreement with the West Bengal government and the Centre being terminated. The second round of the movement for Gorkhaland has begun. However, the Hills parties are not yet united in the showdown. The GNLF is still waiting for the fusion which is likely to take place after the meet on June 29. With the resignation of Bimal Gurung from the GTA, the Hills parties will get a level playing ground to chart out the future course. The GNLF has indicated that it has no objection to the GJM taking the lead.

GJM leaders have now given priority to mobilisation instead of confrontation. Discipline will be the watchword without compromising on the Gorkhaland issue. Darjeeling police will also be on the alert to prevent a flare-up as happened on June 17 causing bullets to fly. Gurung has requested leaders of the Opposition parties to come out in the streets with the GJM as their condition has been met - that the GJM quits the GTA. At the same time Gurung has kept the doors open for talks with the West Bengal government and the Centre though he will not accept any interim arrangement. It appears that the GJM still banks on the NDA government's support for the creation of small states although Darjeeling is too small to be compared with Telengana. In any event, an understanding with Mamata Banerjee's government at this stage seems absolutely out of the question. Darjeeling's future hangs in the balance.

### LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

### 8 Bodo killed in encounters

At least eight people, seven of them Bodo extremists, were killed in Assam's trouble-torn Kokrajhar District in the past 24 hours, official reports received here said. The reports said the Bodo activists armed with guns and bombs ambushed a police party which was proceeding towards Amliguri Lalnwri area on way to Koilamoila under Bijni Police Station,

yesterday. When police opened fire to repulse the attack the extremists escaped in thick jungles.

Later police recovered from the spot four bodies. It is suspected while escaping the extremists took away three more bodies. Besides the four bodies which were yet to be identified, police recovered a handmade gun, a pistol, some cartridges and four bombs from the place of the encounter.

# Who will save Narpuh from imminent destruction?

By H H Mohrmen

Whenever we mention Narpuh, we generally mean the two important features of this region and that is the eleka Narpuh and the Narpuh sanctuary. These are the two elements of the region which are popular, but there is more to Narpuh than the forest and the eleka.

The truth is that the area and everything around it derives its name from Narpuh forest which was once a thick and vast sub-tropical forest which extends from Meghalaya's border with Assam to the state's border with Bangladesh. The entire Narpuh falls under the newly created East Jaintia hills district of Meghalaya and it extends over a large area. Most of the Phnars in different parts of Jaintia hills call Narpuh 'the dark forest' or (ki khloo wa iong) perhaps, because of the density of the forest which prevents even sunlight from penetrating into the innermost parts of the forest. It could also be because of its elevation. It can be seen from a distance as a dark silhouette across the sky. Hence it is called the dark forest.

The other most important aspect of the forest is also because u Lum Iakor Singh and u Lum bahboo bahkong (which of course have their own stories) and are also part of the forest. And the three major rivers of Jaintia hills, ka Kupli, the Lukha and Apha originated from the forest covered hills in this region and these rivers were clean till they pass through the mining areas.

The forest which once housed wild elephants and tigers is now a shadow of its lost glory due to encroachment and poaching but the forest still boasts of many more wild animals like hoolock gibbons, a variety of birds and butterflies and other exotic wild life. Till recently Narpuh was only a reserve forest, but it is now a Wildlife Sanctuary a move which one hopes will help in preserving and protecting the forest and the wildlife in the forest.

The sanctuary is bordering the Boralle forest in Assam and it is more than 50 square kilometres in size. Eleka Narpuh also boasts of a network of exotic caves. The other feature of Narpuh is also because of the eleka or the traditional regional alliance of the villages in the area which is also given the

same name and called eleka Narpuh. The chieftain who heads the eleka is also call the Daloi of Narpuh. Till a decade or so except for Lumshnong, the people in the area earned their livelihood by practising jhum (slash and burn) cultivation and betel leaf and betel nut plantation, but Lumshnong was once upon a time famous for its oranges. Locals claim that the Lumshnong chilly is much more pungent than the Naga chilly and was once the pride of the area. There was once small lime factory which burnt limestone for making lime paste and powdered lime for white-washing at Lumshnong itself, but the arrival of cement plants has changed all the culture and even the land ownership patterns in the region.

Now there are eight cement plants which operate in the eleka and each of them are located within an area of less than five kilometre radius. Most of the land was once covered with thick forest. A reply to a Right to Information (RTI) application confirmed that large tracts of land fall under the category of unclassified forest by the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council (JHADC) but sadly most of the land in the eleka Narpuh is now in the hands of the cement companies. A well informed source confirmed that CMCL or Start Cement has in its possession more than one thousand hectares of land in the area. Topcem owns more than five hundred hectare of land so one can very well imagine what percentage of land in the eleka is still owned by the indigenous people when we still have six more cement plants operating in the area.

The local people have sold their land for a song and in a not so distant future they will not even have space to spit their kwai saliva and these are not my words, this was a statement of a young man from the area who lives in Jowai now. The cement plants claim that they bring development to the area but the question is what development and at what cost? Mining limestone has caused irreparable impact on the environment in the area and the other pertinent

question is whether all the cement companies follow all the rules and regulations as mandated by the Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) and the Ministry of Forest and Environment, Government of India? What about reclamation? How much of the mined areas have been reclaimed? During mining are there any efforts to protect the top soil so that the same can be used for plantation? These are few questions that need answers.

The famous cave krem Kotsati Umlawan which is the second longest cave in India (21, 530 metres) and third deepest cave in India (215 metre as on February 2006) has now been affected by mining. Mining by using dynamite has drastic impact on the cave and speleologists (caving experts) do not encourage people to go inside the caves anymore. Perhaps it is not wrong to say that it is doubtful if the Kotsati Umlawan cave still holds the record that it once held as the second longest and the third deepest cave since it is no longer safe for people to enter anymore.

The area is facing acute water problem especially during the lean season, so what have the companies done to see that clean water is regularly supplied to the locals? Speaking of development, do the cement companies construct any roads in the area apart from approach roads to their plants and mining site? There are altogether eight active cement companies in the area. Why can they start a hospital to cater to the needs of the people in the area? In my last visit to the place during World Environment day, I was shocked to know that despite there being eight operating cement plants in the area there is no facility to monitor air and water pollution. The government and the cement companies have put the health of the people in danger by not installing machinery to measure air and water pollution in the area.

But the other vital question is how many youths are now employed in the eight plants? Each plant employs about 450 employees per plan per shift, so in total the plant employs more than ten thousand people. The question is how many of the ten thousand employees are local people?

Does the industry respect the agreement to provide sixty percent employment to the locals? Many a time local people from the state were employed by the companies but very soon they were fired from their jobs on the pretext that they do not have industrial culture.

What development are we talking about if they do not provide local people training on (so called) industrial culture? The cement companies owe it to the people of eleka Narpuh and it is their duty to train and prepare the local youths to work in their units.

The other question is the cement companies' Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). People have the right to know what and how the companies have made use of their CSR fund? Why is the government not insisting on companies making this contribution public? The people also have the right to know why the companies set up their head offices outside Meghalaya and why is there no difference in the rate of cement sold in Meghalaya and anywhere else in the northeast? To protect the Narpuh sanctuary the areas in the fringes of Narpuh forest were declared as Eco Sensitive Zones (ESZ), but local people protested against the move to protect this last tropical forest in the district. Everybody knows that the many cement companies have purchased most of the land in these areas, so the companies should let go and also allow the ESZ to be notified. Protecting Narpuh is for the local people's own interests and for the welfare of the future generation of the area. Narpuh is now the source of clean air for the people and it is also a reservoir for the area's future needs of fresh and clean water. Even today Lukha is still clean in the upstream a little further above Khaddum village which goes on to prove that Narpuh can supply the area's need of fresh clean water if we can only protect and preserve the forest. So the cements companies should play a vital role in preserving the Narpuh sanctuary by educating the local if the companies are really working for the interests of the people.

Political analysts feel that Trinamul Congress which is becoming popular in the hills had kept GJM on the back-foot in the recent municipal elections. Bimal Gurung who suddenly seems to be unusually vocal about Gorkhaland is losing the image of Messiah for the hill people in spite of the recently declared support of Pawan Kumar Chamling for a separate state of Gorkhaland. The hegemony of GJM is at stake and the followers of Gurung who are behaving like club members instead of being responsible political leaders are in a tizzy. Money was coming to the hills for development work but irregularities were found in audit and GJM leaders were found enjoying unexpected luxury while the poor people of Mirik, Kurseong and outskirts of Darjeeling remained in the same darkness of poverty. The leaders were scared of the special audit that Mamata Government is planning to slap on them. Another misinformation is spread regarding the inclusion of Bengali in the three-language formula which can never make Bengali mandatory for the learners in schools. Bengali is already optional since the 60's and it will be an optional fourth language which can make Bengali people closer to Gorkhas. The emotional sentiments against Bengali is without any logic. Even if there is some misconception, it could have been solved by dialogue on language but it can never justify the demand for Gorkhaland.

Tourism is suffering and ordinary life will be hampered for an indefinite period and the number of deaths will increase with the so-called protection of Gorkha rights. Everyone knows that Gorkhas are patriots and not anti-nationals. They do not want separation from Bengal. They hardly spread communal hatred. If Gorkhaland is their demand

Yours etc.,  
Aiborlang Nongsiej  
Mawkyrwat

## Darjeeling Weeps : Gorkhaland A Nightmare

By Ratan Bhattacharjee

The 78-kilometer toy train line from NJP to Darjeeling is silent. Few are seen in the tea gardens Tear gas shells counter the stones and bottles pelted at the police. The unrest over a long simmering separatist movement rattles the town which this time of the year keeps buzzing with tourists from all over India. Darjeeling is weeping and Gorkhaland which is a dream for the Gorkhas is now turning into a nightmare. The sky remained cloudy even at dawn with tourists hurrying to leave the hills, bag and baggage at the earliest convenience. Tourists earlier stopped coming to Darjeeling. But after Mamata Banerjee had come to power, peace prevailed in Darjeeling and GTA was formed. Development projects were undertaken. People nearly forgot the 'Gorkhaland' aspirations and the Gurkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) inspired the people to be happy with Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) and the developments works. Suddenly after the Municipal elections where the GJM cut a very sorry figure, there is a pandemonium in the hills. Schools and colleges, banks and offices are closed. Life has come to a standstill. The GJM wants a new, separate state of "Gorkhaland" carved out of eastern West Bengal state, of which Darjeeling is a part. The decades-old imbroglio demands a permanent solution but no one knows the right one. It is unfortunate that there is some organized attempt to bring the Hill versus Plains issue to the limelight. More unfortunate is the attempt to show the fissure between Gorkhas and Bengali people. These unwarrantedly opened up a Pandora's box.

Political analysts feel that Trinamul Congress which is becoming popular in the hills had kept GJM on the back-foot in the recent municipal elections. Bimal Gurung who suddenly seems to be unusually vocal about Gorkhaland is losing the image of Messiah for the hill people in spite of the recently declared support of Pawan Kumar Chamling for a separate state of Gorkhaland. The hegemony of GJM is at stake and the followers of Gurung who are behaving like club members instead of being responsible political leaders are in a tizzy. Money was coming to the hills for development work but irregularities were found in audit and GJM leaders were found enjoying unexpected luxury while the poor people of Mirik, Kurseong and outskirts of Darjeeling remained in the same darkness of poverty. The leaders were scared of the special audit that Mamata Government is planning to slap on them. Another misinformation is spread regarding the inclusion of Bengali in the three-language formula which can never make Bengali mandatory for the learners in schools. Bengali is already optional since the 60's and it will be an optional fourth language which can make Bengali people closer to Gorkhas. The emotional sentiments against Bengali is without any logic. Even if there is some misconception, it could have been solved by dialogue on language but it can never justify the demand for Gorkhaland.

Tourism is suffering and ordinary life will be hampered for an indefinite period and the number of deaths will increase with the so-called protection of Gorkha rights. Everyone knows that Gorkhas are patriots and not anti-nationals. They do not want separation from Bengal. They hardly spread communal hatred. If Gorkhaland is their demand

, they will not keep silent for such a long time and suddenly after the defeat in the municipal elections they would not have come to the streets. Everyone now realises that the uproar and violence are not spontaneous but organized by some GJM leaders who failed to grind their own axe and are fishing in troubled waters. They know only one panacea for all sufferings - Gorkhaland. These possessive leaders being scared of exposure are distorting the state narrative on Gorkhaland and threatening with an armed rebellion which does not seem to have enormous public support.

Gorkhas are scattered across different states. They have socio-cultural roots across various Indian states such as Uttarakhnd, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram etc.,. The same community has a strong presence in Myanmar. So the separation of Darjeeling as Gorkhaland will not solve the problem at all or give the Gorkhas a single state identity. That is why for the last one century the issue of bifurcation of Bengal is left hanging and Gorkhaland remains a dream for many which the GJM is now turning into a nightmare for the hill dwellers. It is quite interesting that Ghishing earlier tried to fish in troubled waters and lived like a king by using the Gorkhaland issue. Now Bimal Gurung and his people are again singing the same tune though this time the response is not up to his expectation as people have come to know about the financial irregularities of his party members and the luxurious life led by many of them while the interests of the common people are ignored. The development projects are being halted and people do not feel happy with this sudden bolt from the blue. Gorkhaland is no longer the 'son of the soil' movement in Darjeeling. It is now a weapon which through over-use has got blunt. People are more worried about the ambiguity of their citizenship which cannot be solved by creating a Gorkhaland. Nor will it solve the identity crisis and ensure Constitutional guarantee for the 15 lakhs Indian Gorkhas living in so many states almost in equal number and mostly acclimatized and accommodated into the state cultural heritage. The Gorkha Nepali syndrome is confusing and many Nepalis do not want to be called Gorkhas. Before the Gurungs come out in armed rebellion with the support from the Sikkim Chief Minister they should become transparent and more accountable. They cannot shout Gorkhaland only when they have fallen in a trap. This will probably dilute the demand. There should be a rationale for any movement. The situation cannot change overnight. Only yesterday GTA was nicely working towards the betterment of the Gorkhas. That suddenly a few leaders are shouting foul in favour of Gorkhaland will only affect the accountability and credibility of the GJM leaders who are now a broken house after the murder of Madan Tamang and the misappropriation of funds allotted for development for the hills. The adage still holds true: "You can fool all of the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time but you cannot fool all the people all the time."

(The author is Associate Professor and Head of Post Graduate Dept of English Dum Dum Motijheel College, Columnist cum Poet. He can be reached at profpratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com)

### TO THE EDITOR

### Rejoinder

Editor,  
Apropos the letter by AS Syiem ("Who is against railways?" ST 24/6/17) which is a response to my letter (ST June 22, 2017), it sounds like a government mouthpiece. With due respect to Syiem whom I thought was a gentleman (an academician) and who would not so easily give in to sweeping statements about catholic priests or anyone for that matter, my perception about him after reading his letter has shifted from respect to pity. To say that we priests do not know the socio-economic pulse of the people or their problems, is the most stupid statement I have heard from an academician. Does he know that catholic priests visit the rural areas and are in touch with poor people more than he does or any government officer does? Does he know that the Catholic Church has got more schools and dispensaries in the rural areas than any other religious groups or the government for that matter? Does he know that the undersigned has a pastoral care of 8 villages and he is not an armchair theologian or academician? Does he know that the undersigned's opinion about the negative impact of railways is not subjective but is based on his conversations and

discussions with many persons and groups?

When I speak about improving the Shillong airport and road connectivity, it is with the idea of improving tourism (that's the reason why I support the idea of the CM about a railway from Shillong to Sohra). Syiem himself will have to admit that tourism is the only strong economic opportunity we have since Meghalaya is not an industrialized or agricultural state. I think Syiem is not sincere if he still thinks that railways will not increase influx into the state. Even a common man without much education understands that. Let Syiem know that the Church has always been on the side of the people of the place and if the Khasi people (who are just a grain of sand in the huge population of India) are in real danger of being outnumbered, should the Church keep quiet and watch the slow extinction of a community? Did not Jesus himself side with the tax collectors, the Samaritans etc. (who were minority groups) against the domination of the majority Jewish high class? I think Syiem should understand that the right of self preservation is a universal right and those who try to do that (of course not through violence) should not be branded as

ethnocentric. To conclude I must say that Syiem is guilty of defaming the Catholic Church and the catholic priests. If he is truly a gentleman, he should apologize for such demeaning statements.

Yours etc.,  
Barnes Mawrie sdb,  
Via email

### Many groups are against Railways

Editor,  
Apropos the letter by AS Syiem 'Who is against Railways' (ST June 24, 2017) in response to the letter by Barnes Mawrie, 'We need roads not Railways' (ST June 22) I would say that both are equally correct because both letters speak of the benefits to society in different ways. Syiem has stated that Barnes wants Airport at Umroi to be upgraded and not railways, and added that only someone like Mawrie can afford air travel. Personally I agree with Mawrie that we need roads not railways. Roads in our state have turned from bad worse. When I was coming from Mizoram last winter and when we reached Meghalaya-Assam border one of the passengers said 'I had never traveled in any road in India that is worse

than the Meghalaya road. I tried to defend my state by saying that this is a National highway and not under the state government. Likewise I had a chat a number of tourists in Mawlynong and Cherrapunji and all of them speak of the need to improve the road condition in our state. John F. Kennedy in his address to the public once said, 'American roads are not good because America is rich, but America is rich because American roads are good'. Therefore the main concern of Mawrie is to develop the roads first and not to enforce the railways without improving the road condition in the state. I believe Syiem knows the road condition of Sonapur in East Jaintia Hills District. Several times newspapers have reported of road accidents in this particular area. Just last year one night super fell into a deep gorge and many innocent people lost their lives. This road is very difficult to travel especially during rainy seasons. And this is supposed to be National Highway 44! I also believe that Syiem is aware of the three lists (Union, State and Concurrent) which is in the seventh schedule of the Indian Constitution. Hence, National Highways and Railways are directly

sanctioned by the central government. The NH 44 linking East Jaintia Hills to Cachar district of Assam has deteriorated with time. Hence I would agree with the statement of Mawrie that we need roads first before railways. However, I also agree with Syiem that railways will make the commodities coming from outside the state much cheaper. How many railway stations in India are clean? Just this month (5th June) we celebrated World Environmental Day and many schools and villages took active part in cleaning, planting trees in different areas of the state. We have seen articles, letters to newspaper that Shillong is losing its fame of being the Scotland of the East and the city itself is dirty. Just imagine if we have a railway station in Shillong!

It is probably because of these reasons that many pressure groups like KSU, HNYF, FKJGP etc are against the implementation of railway connection in our state. Just the other day the newspaper reported that Deputy Commissioner of East Khasi Hills, P.S Dkhar gave permission to some pressure groups to protest against the railways in the state capital. Therefore for AS Syiem to ask who is against railways is totally wrong, when many KSU leaders are being arrested by the police everyday

*“Men's second childhood begins when a woman gets a hold of him.”*

--- Minna Antrim

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 315

SHILLONG, TUESDAY, JUNE 27, 2017

### Ghastly incident!

A senior police official, Mohammad Ayub Pandit was lynched as he was trying to ensure that prayers could be completed without a hitch at Srinagar's Jamia Masjid. His body was badly mutilated. Questions arise about the calamitous night when it occurred. It is hard to understand why his force could not come to his rescue. Kashmiris in uniform, belonging to the police or the army, are new targets not only of militants but also of the angry public. It has been a phenomenon in the last one month or so. Recently a young army officer was murdered at a wedding ceremony. Kashmiris in the J & K police force have been murdered on a number of occasions in cold blood. It appears to be a sequel to the extermination of militants. These occurrences are not just retaliatory actions. The outrages show that Kashmiris in the service of the state will continue to be victims of such violence.

The Kashmir crisis has thus taken a new turn. Though the militants are on the rampage against it, people of the valley seek government jobs in large numbers, especially in the police force. Only Kashmiris have familiarity with the terrain and are best suited for such security operations in the vulnerable areas of the state. But now they are identified as enemies of the state. Kashmir's society looks upon them as betrayers of the people. Ordinary people have taken up the cause of militants. It shows how much anger has mounted in the valley and to what extent society in the state has been radicalized. Pandit was lynched in his own area. He received the treatment that the Islamic state metes out to kafirs.

### LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

### Khongwir's plea on State Assembly sitting

The Leader of the opposition Mr S.D. Khongwir, has in a letter to the Chief Minister Mr Sangma requested that the months between November and May be left free of Assembly sittings to the "maximum possible" for facilitating the timely implementation of projects, schemes and programmes in the State. Mr Khongwir said in his letter that whenever

the Assembly session is on the centre government machinery is glued to the respective offices attending to Assembly matters. Since the months between May and October re monsoon months, and developed works are generally impeded, the timings of the Assembly could be adjusted so that the debates could be taken up for 30 or 40 days in June-July.

### TO THE EDITOR

### A critique of the IBDLP!

Editor,  
Apropos the article "Job creation through Entrepreneurship Development" by HH Mohmen, (ST June 19, 2017), I wish to remind the readers of ST that this Livelihood Programme was launched in April, 2012 and it has already travelled more than five years. The concept and purpose of the Integrated Basin Development & Livelihoods Programme (IBDLP) is indeed wonderful. But somehow, it has lost its way and not touched lives on the ground. In fact it has become a monolithic piece of idealistic concept document, bereft of practicability. Till today, many know very little about this programme for lack of publicity and awareness. In fact many public representatives, including ministers and officers of departments do not properly understand what this programme all about. Quite a few have not even grasped the meanings of partnership and convergence. Many officers in different line departments were not willing at all to partner and converge with each other to ensure smooth realisation of the objectives of the programme. Initially many officers of different line departments were confused. Hence they even refused to co-operate in the convergence process. This is due to ignorance or lack of clarity on the part of the implementing and executing officers of line departments.

Another thing is that there was no wide and proper

publicity and awareness on the programmes through the print and electronic media for the public to know about IBDLP and its packages. There are offices at the Headquarters, District and facilitation centres at the Block levels but no proper publicity is given by these centres (offices). Another aspect, which is the most important part, is that most of these offices and facilitation centres hardly reach out to the towns and villages to reach out to the partners (stakeholders). Even if interested partners approach the facilitation centres, they are not properly briefed or guided by the facilitators at the centres because they are not properly motivated, fully equipped and trained to lead and guide the partners in the best way. Hence, many partners got disillusioned, disinterested and disappeared. The few partners who could grasp things and were keen on starting something better for alternate livelihoods got bogged down because they had to run from pillar to post to get things done, despite facilitators and convergence mode. Also the banks laid down various guidelines and conditions which are impossible for the poor but interested partner to overcome. In fact, very few partners managed to jump over the obstacles.

There may be few exceptions and success stories. But again, these few success stories must be analysed from various standpoints, to get into the bottom of such cases. Perhaps, there might be some other factors that led

to the success stories and the credit is hijacked by IBDLP! Hence, the partial success of the programme. I have visited many Districts during the last two years but there is no noticeable livelihood transformation on the ground on account of IBDLP. Concerned authorities may say that the gestation period of this programme is long but five years is long enough to see the results on the ground. What is the use of having big and well-furnished offices of IBDLP in the state and the people manning them if results are not forthcoming? Therefore, I term this programme a big hoax. I can point out many other lapses in the implementation of the programme but there is limited space here.

Hence, I suggest that this programme ought to be reviewed and revisited and the defects and gaps ought to be addressed to ensure near 100 per cent success. If not, then scrap the programme for good for our state is too poor to waste its precious resources in such a pompous and high voltage platitudinous programme.

Except for the providing job placement to the youth and middle aged people who are working in Headquarters, District IBDLP offices and facilitation centres, the IBDLP is a failure because crores of rupees have been sunk into this programme in the last five years. This has become a white elephant and the state can ill-afford to throw its precious resources down the drains like this.

Yours etc.,

### Farmers Waiver

# What about money lenders debt?

By Moin Qazi

Notwithstanding that the government is all set to forgive billions of dollars of loans of farmers, the actually distressed class among them will have no respite from their misery. They owe their debts to money lenders whereas the government waiver applies only to formal credit.

Almost every farmer in India's massive rural swatches is tethered, in one way or another, to the sahuakar, the Indian variety of the money lender, the ubiquitous, ravenous loan shark. For centuries, money lenders have monopolised rural Indian credit markets. Families have lost land, farmers have been asked to prostitute their wives to pay off debts, and, when all else has failed, they have tied the noose to end their misery.

An inescapable cycle of debt continues to grip rural India, particularly its farming class. Yet the public image of menacing debt collectors does not reflect the actual plight of India's three million farmers. Money lenders have been around for generations, but their business has boomed ever since India's economic priorities shifted, with globalisation, from agriculture to industry. The arrival of high-cost seeds and pesticides and the attraction of bumper harvests have added to the debts. In farm belts money lenders operate under the guise of farm input sellers.

In Maharashtra, farmers' dependence on private money lenders has shown a steep rise at 40 per cent in the past one year. The total amount of loans disbursed by private money lenders was Rs 1,254.97 crore. Compared to 2015 statistics, the total amount disbursed thus has risen by Rs 358.63 crore.

According to the All India Debt Investment Survey 2012, nearly 48% farmers across the country took loans from informal sources such as moneylenders and landlords. The number had risen from 36% in 1991 and 43% in 2001. Among farmers who owned land parcels

— from shopkeepers,

government officials, and policemen to village teachers — now lends in the hope of making a killing. They are willing to extend credit, but at highly extortionate rates — sometimes exceeding 50 per cent, which keeps borrowers in lifelong penury. "Shylocks give you that instant fix. You aren't asked for security or guarantors. I borrowed again this year and it is going well. I think that because of the ease of it, borrowing becomes addictive," says a cash-strapped farmer.

Loan sharks also do not ask questions regarding your borrowing history, meaning that the defaulters find a safe haven with them. Then there are those who are seeking to hide because of the shame of borrowing. Seeing as the transactions are quick and the requirements minimal, the moneylenders might seem like the perfect solution for those seeking a quick fix. Their customers agree that they are a working solution — as long as you do not default on your loan.

A current of dread runs through the country's suicide-ravaged farmlands as their debts pass from husband to widow, from father to children. Most villages are locked into a bond with village money lenders — an intimate bond, and sometimes a menacing one. Popular cinema and classic literature tell many pathos-filled narratives of India's poor caught in that karmic cycle of poverty. Those stories inevitably end in tragedy.

Farmers who fall into the money lending trap find themselves locked in a white-knuckle gamble, juggling ever-larger loans at usurious interest rates, in the hope that someday a bumper harvest will allow them to clear their debts — so they can take out new ones. This pattern has left a trail of human wreckage.

The authors of a landmark study of the system of credit and household indebtedness published by the Reserve

Bank of India (RBI) in the early 1950s, the All-India Rural Credit Survey, scrutinised the role and operations of the moneylender, who then enjoyed a dominant position as a source of finance. They did so on the premise that, in India, agricultural credit presented a "two-fold problem of inadequacy and unsuitability."

They envisaged only a minor place for him in their proposed solution, which took the form of a system of cooperatives covering all villages: "The moneylender can be allotted no part in the scheme (of cooperatives) ... It would be a complete reversal of the policies we have been advocating ... when the whole object of ... that structure is to provide a positive institutional alternative to the moneylender himself, something which will compete with him, remove him from the forefront and put him in his place."

Despite legions of committees and reports that have outlined ways of replacing moneylenders through stepping up institutional credit, the moneylender still remains the backbone of the rural financial system. It is a bitter truth which we have to swallow.

The picture which Nobel Laureate Gunnar Myrdal presented in his memoirs Asian Drama almost five decades ago remains the same, despite gigantic efforts from both the private and public sector in bringing large swaths of people into the folds of formal finance. "When the money lender sees that he can benefit from the default of a debtor he becomes an enemy of the village economy," he wrote. "By charging exorbitant interest rates or by inducing the peasant to accept larger credits than he can manage, the money lender can hasten the process by which the peasant is dispossessed." ---INFA

## Flying Cars: a peek into the future of modern transportation

By Ibu Sanjeeb Garg

### BEATING THE RHETORIC

Necessity is the mother of invention goes a famous saying. Mankind has chosen to better itself when pushed to the wall. The greatest invention and discoveries whether penicillin or electricity has come because of a human desire to solve a problem. In 21st century India transportation has emerged as a major challenge while imagining urban planning. If we take the example of Delhi, an average Delhiite spends nearly three hours daily on the road while travelling almost 40 kms. If one takes an Uber from Gurugram in Haryana to Connaught place in Delhi then the cost would be almost 600 rupees while taking one hour time during normal timings and up to two hours during peak hours. Travelling between the peak hours is almost a nightmare.

And this is not limited to Delhi alone. The garden city of Bengaluru has become famous in the past few years for its traffic jams. It has become the source of constant jokes and memes over the internet. Similar

are taking place all over US and Europe. Closer home industry powerhouses like the Tatas are looking to invest in the next generation of transportation technology. Electronic powered vehicles and Flying cars seem to be the future of urban transportation.

Taxi aggregator Uber is also raising its stakes in the flying game. Recently on a trial basis it has started offering Helicopter rides over short distances. Uber is launching the UBER Elevate programme which would have a series of takeoff and landing electric VTOL points from which passengers would travel from one point to another. There would be multiple vertiports or landing points in a city which would have recharge facility as well. While last mile connectivity would be an issue in the case of Uber Elevate yet Uber plans to invest in its Elevate programme in a massive push in the coming years. Uber predicts that with Uber Elevate, a 1-hour, 40-minute

**The Dutch company PAL-V has designed a three wheel vehicle that looks like a scooter but flies like a gyroplane with the help of an aerodynamic design and rotor blades. In the PAL-V vehicle the rotors are powered by the wind and not the engine itself. It can fly upto a speed of 180kmph and is scheduled to make a debut in 2018. Priced at almost 4 crores each it does not seem like a vehicle that would be owned by everyone, anytime soon. Yet it does set a benchmark and a tone for the future, a sign of the things to come. Elsewhere in the US backed by Google cofounder Larry Page, the Kitty Hawk flyer, a personal aeroplane is being built.**

stories are repeated in other major cities of the country including Mumbai and Kolkata. Even Tier 2 cities like Guwahati are finding it hard to control traffic. Cities are often victims of their topography and unsustainable urban development at the same time. In sum urban transportation will soon transform from a problem to an unmanageable disaster, unless innovative solutions are brought into the drawing board. And one such idea is the idea of flying cars. Often limited to scientific movies and fiction the world will soon greet the real possibility of having flying cars soon.

The Dutch company PAL-V has designed a three wheel vehicle that looks like a scooter but flies like a gyroplane with the help of an aerodynamic design and rotor blades. In the PAL-V vehicle the rotors are powered by the wind and not the engine itself. It can fly upto a speed of 180kmph and is scheduled to make a debut in 2018. Priced at almost 4 crores each it does not seem like a vehicle that would be owned by everyone, anytime soon. Yet it does set a benchmark and a tone for the future, a sign of the things to come. Elsewhere in the US backed by Google cofounder Larry Page, the Kitty Hawk flyer, a personal aeroplane is being built. It will be taken outdoors very soon as the prototype design is in the final stages. Similar projects

commute from Gurugram to Delhi could be cut to just 6 minutes. The first partner cities for the project are Dallas-Fort Worth, US, and Dubai, where Uber expects to demonstrate the network by 2020. To develop electric VTOL vehicles for Elevate Uber is also partnering with aircraft manufacturers like Aurora Flight Sciences, Pipistrel Aircraft, Embraer, Mooney International and Bell Helicopter among others.

Yet flying cars will bring their own set of challenges in the coming years. The first question would be the issue of regulation itself. Whether these vehicles would be regarded as aircrafts or cars would be the first question. Regulations would differ accordingly. The second question is that of safety. Such flying cars would need to concentrate on primary and secondary systems. If the primary systems fail then the secondary systems would have to kick in. The longer these flying cars stay airborne, the more power they will need. More power can only be generated by bigger batteries. But most batteries that power electric vehicles are heavy. A flying car that weighs a lot won't be able to clock too much flight time. Minimizing the size of batteries is a key parameter because they will be one of the biggest components in flying cars. Yet there is no doubt that the future is flying cars and the changing face of urban transportation.

(Views expressed are personal)

Philip Marwein,  
Via email

### Alcohol ban

Editor,  
Your report "Liquor ban does more harm than good in long run" (ST: June 23, 2017) clearly shows that the complete ban on the production and sale of alcohol, while reducing total consumption, does not imply that alcohol is not available in any state. While complete prohibition has been shown to be a failure, the current permissiveness without the enforcement of regulations also represents a lack of responsibility from a public health perspective. Indian society and governments need to take a longer term view of issues and plan a coordinated and comprehensive approach. But the point is that in spite of knowing that drinking is a dangerous social evil, it has now become a symbol of affluence and social prestige. We need to design our law and policies in such a way that we face minimal loss due to alcoholism.

Yours etc.,  
Vinod C. Dixit  
Ahmedabad- 15

### Why a Dalit Prex candidate is important

Editor,  
In his article, "NDA candidate the ideal saffron soldier" (ST, June 23, 2017), Amulya Ganguli has said that Kovind's selection as NDA's Presidential candidate confirms that caste is becoming a major

factor in choosing the President. This has indeed brought a very pertinent question to the fore. Should we consider demographic credentials of a person in the political arena of a federal and plural country? Or should we focus on her or his merit only? A country which has a rainbow of languages, states, castes, cultures and religions, can in no way ignore demographic credentials of a person in a political space. Indeed, all the Members of Parliament are being elected on the basis of their demographic credentials. Every state of our country sends as many MPs to the Parliament as is proportionate to its population.

No federal country can afford to do away with this system and introduce meritocratic yardstick. Indian cricket team where merit is the sole criterion of selection does not have any representation of many states of our country. It is okay for a cricket team. But it would be ludicrous if our Parliament fails to have representation of all the Indian states.

Moreover, we need to give priority to demographic credentials as century-old brainwash projecting Dalits as eligible only for menial jobs has made such a dent in our mindsets that we have started questioning the eligibility of Dalits for a high post even if the person happens to be a former Supreme Court lawyer with a clean image or a former Speaker of the House with a graceful track record. Not only does such brainwash penetrate into the minds of casteists but in Dalit's psyche

as well. Even Dalits are not free from regressive Dalit-inferiority-complex as was happened in Hitler's Germany where some Jews themselves started doubting their own potentiality just after a few years of Goebbelsian propaganda.

That was why Mahatma Gandhi wanted a Dalit woman as India's first President but his suggestion was turned down. At a public address on 27 June 1947, he said, "If I have my way, the President of the Indian Republic will be a chaste and brave Bhangi girl... if such a girl of my dreams becomes President, I shall be her servant and I shall not expect from the Government even my upkeep."

Dalits have been projected as lesser humans for centuries. But can their symbolic representation at the top of our administration really help break ourselves free from age-old prejudices? To get the answer, we will turn to the article, "What Obama's victory means about race and class", where Malik Miah said, "Obama's victory, more than symbolic, represents a change in attitudes. But the symbolism in and of itself is powerful, because of the country's racist history. It is that symbolism that every African American understands, including many of those on the right."

Yours etc,  
Sujit De,  
Kolkata

*"Can there be a love which does not make demands on its object?"*

--- Mangnu Hirschfield

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 316 SHILLONG, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017

### India's fatal flaw

THE biggest problem of India is that it has not let go off the colonial baggage. Fair skin is premium; foreigners are always treated better than Indians in any hotel or social gathering. We swoon over the white skin so much so that Fairness creams for both women and men are one of the fastest selling products in the market. And then there is the last vestige of colonial hang-up which is represented by so-called elite, haute clubs with a very strict dress code as if clothes define a person or his character. In the land of Gandhi who walked around only with his dhoti is it incongruous that a club should define the dress of the colonial masters as the accepted dress code for men and the sari and other formal western dresses for women. In a country that is so diverse and with several cultural outfits that are equivalent to the "national" dress for those who wear them, it is ridiculous to chase a lady out who was invited to the up market Delhi Golf Club only because she was in an attire that the club officials could not recognize as being Indian or national. But more than the dress those in charge of the club perhaps gauged the social status of the Khasi lady, a governess to the son of a lady doctor-entrepreneur based in London, by her dress, which they thought did not merit here a lunch at the high table. The culturally illiterate Club officials had no business to chase away an invitee who was wearing a dress that is the honour and pride of Meghalaya and of Khasi womanhood. According to the doctor employer, Tailin Lyngdoh, her son's governess was also invited for the lunch and was not there as an appendage. So to ask Lyngdoh to get out is to insult those who invited her.

It is good that the doctor has taken up this matter in the right quarters. The news has gone viral over social media and has been picked up by the national print and television media. Meanwhile the Delhi Golf Club has apologised saying the matter could have been handled better. How? This is a poor attempt at getting out of a difficult situation and the matter should not be allowed to rest there! Can a country where the class division is so sharp really call itself a democracy!

### LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

## Journalists demand safeguarding citizens' right to information

Distinguished journalist and legal experts today demanded safeguarding of the citizens' right to official information through suitable constitutional enactment. "Journalists whose mission it is to inform, are particularly handicapped by the absence of such legislation and have a special responsibility to press for its immediate enactment" participants observed at the seminar on "Right to Information and Official Secrets Act" here by the Delhi Union of Journalists (DUJ).

They called for "a democratic action" not only by the journalist fraternity but also by the professional bodies and the intelligentsia of the country to compel the Government to concede to their demands. Observing that the citizens' right of access to official information was indispensable to the unfettered functioning of India's Democracy, the participants opined that the Official Secrets Act particularly its section five with its sweeping powers was a major obstacle to the free flow of information and should forthwith be repealed. Any new law taking its place should precisely define national security and public interest so that these terms do not become shields for misdeeds and misgovernment they said.

Indian Express editor-in-chief Mr Arun Shourie said it was now more imperative that the common men have the right to official information, especially as the Government had been going on several issues disclosed in public.

Describing the act as "barbarous" Mr Shourie said it should be challenged as the journalist had to earn their freedom." Noted lawyer Mr Kapil Sibal observed that the Act was "unconstitutional" as there were no norms, no definition and no criteria about a document coming under the purview of the Act.

Calling for talking the matter to the court, Mr Sibal suggested the setting up of a board of experts to review the documents for classification as confidential or top secret. In his opening remarks DJA president Mr Balbit K. Punj said there was a pressing need to re-examine the Official Secrets Act, the Contempt of Court Act and the law with regard to parliamentary privileges. These laws, he said, were impediments to free flow of information." Eminent lawyer Mr Rajiv Dhawan said the Government was misusing the Act to terrorise the journalists exposing the Government's misdeeds.

### Cinema licence suspended for possessing censored film

The district magistrate of Kamrup Mr U N Bhuyan has suspended the licence of "Meghdoot" cinema here for a week from today. The action followed the seizure of seven reels of the film "The Worm in the Apple" from the hall on April 3 last by the district administration for showing obscene portion of the film censored by the censor board under the Indian Cinematograph Act 1952.

The official announcement of the Presidential candidates by the NDA and Opposition after much speculation and anxious wait has set the ball rolling for a reality check. With increase in the number of political parties and firm establishment of coalition politics, election of the President is in a way a test for survival of current alliances and opportunity for re-alignment.

From the beginning, there has been no sincere or serious effort to find a consensual candidate. Contest between the two main groups looked inevitable. Indeed, contest has been the rule and unopposed selection an exception that happened only once in presidential election. That was in 1977 when Neelam Sanjiva Reddy nominated by the Janata Party was elected after Internal Emergency when the Congress was in receding tide.

Voters being Parliament members of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha and MLAs of 31 States and Union Territories, building majority is no easy task in the politics of alliances fiercely pursued today. It necessarily involves coming together of many parties -- many of them regional.

Electors in the Presidential election include 4,120 MLAs of 31 States + 776 MPs (543 Lok Sabha and 233 Rajya Sabha members) belonging to different parties. They are divided among the two major teams --- NDA and UPA -- the neutral group, and fence sitters for this indirect presidential election.

Majority by number of voters is not the decisive factor in this election. It is a rather complicated arithmetical exercise designed to ensure parity between the Union and States and to take into account relative population size represented by the voters. Each vote carries weightage, which is the value of votes. The value of the vote of every MP is equal throughout the country and is far higher than that of a MLA.

### TO THE EDITOR

## Don't interfere with religion and language

Editor,  
There are certain so called "delicate issues" which should be treated as sacrosanct and which by no means ought to be interfered with. Two of such issues are religion and language. Whenever these issues are interfered with, there has always been violent reactions by the affected groups. Decades back, the central government tried to impose Hindi in South India which met with violent resistance resulting in disdain for the national language. In the 1970s the Assam government tried to impose Assamese language on tribal communities and the result was a demand for cessation from Assam and the creation of separate states.

These days, the West Bengal Government is stirring the hornet's nest by trying to impose Bengali language on the hill tribes of Darjeeling. This has caused a revival of the demand for a separate Gorkha Land. We are witnessing a lot of violence and unrest in these hill regions. I am sure if the government tries to pursue this policy, it is going to create more chaos in the region and many more innocent lives will be lost.

Trying to interfere with the religious beliefs of people is another delicate

issue that can ignite fury and violence. History has ample lessons to teach us on this matter. What the BJP government is trying to do in many states of India today is exactly meddling with the religious beliefs of people. The so called "ghar wapsi" is a euphemism for forced conversion to Hinduism. Many Dalits have been enticed to come back to Hinduism through many incentives and sometimes even by threats. The attempt to impose a religious ideology, namely, that of the sacredness of the cow, on all citizens of India, is another form of religious interference. Why should a Muslim or a Christian be compelled to worship the cow just because we live in Hindu majority country? In my opinion, if religious beliefs of others are not respected or even interfered with, there is bound to be a reaction which may lead to undesirable results. Those at the helm of national or state affairs should keep in mind that they should never interfere with religions, cultures or languages of other communities. These are hallowed grounds for every group of people which should be respected and revered. It pays to remember the famous saying "fools rush where angels fear to tread." A wise government is one that knows how to respect and preserve the secular characteristic of a nation. Religious or linguistic romanticism should by no

### By S Saraswathi

The value of the vote of MLAs differs from State to State as it is related to the population of concerned States and to the number of Assembly constituencies in that State. The value of one MLA's vote is calculated as Total population of the State or Union Territory/Total number of elected members of the State divided by 1,000. The value of each MLA vote of each State is calculated and then the total value of votes of all MLAs of all States aggregated.

The value of the vote of each MP is equal to the total value of votes of all MLAs of all States/total number of elected members of MPs of LS and RS. Thus, the total value of votes of all the elected members of Parliament will be equal to the total value of votes of all the MLAs of all the States. This is intended to secure parity between the States and the Union. By this way, the total value of votes of 776 MPs is 5,49,495 and of MLAs 5,49,408.

A noteworthy feature of presidential poll is that there is no provision for issuing party whip and hence there is no scope for anti-defection law to play a role. Members are technically free to vote according to their wish. The hold is party discipline, and bondage within by an effective tie-- voluntary or involuntary-- serves to discourage cross voting.

Inapplicability of whip became the instrument of Indira Gandhi to field VV Giri against the official Congress nominee Neelam Sanjiva Reddy in 1969. Her appeal for "conscience vote" succeeded in elevating her candidate as the President. However, the price paid by the party was the great split and more than that, a permanent blot on the party.

The transitory character of political party alliances is being reaffirmed and openly exhibited today in extending support to the two principal contenders --

Ram Nath Kovind and Meira Kumar. Each party and in some cases, each faction within a party has its own reason. Politics of alliance comes into play, but not "alliance dharma".

For the BJP and the Congress alone, it is a contest between their candidates. For others, it is a question of supporting or opposing the candidates fielded by the two, or remaining in or leaving the block with which they are presently associated.

The biggest surprise is the decision of the JD(U) to support NDA nominee who happened to be the Bihar Governor. For the Congress which is hoping to cement a block for 2019 General Election, it is a shock. It triggered a war of words within the ruling grand alliance in Bihar.

For the onlookers, the break coming soon after the national "political summit" of non-NDA leaders at the birthday gathering at Karunanidhi's residence in Chennai, it is an interesting development. For political analysts, it is a lesson in alliance politics which is already riddled with uncertainties. The party also openly expressed that it will be good for Bihar -- a sound argument but unrelated to political alliance. Speculations on the future of the grand alliance of Bihar have started even as the temporary character of political teams is well known.

Loss of the JD(U) for the UPA is compensated by the support of Trinamool Congress--arch enemy of the Congress in West Bengal. It has also prompted one of its stalwarts, Digvijaya Singh, to call upon "all progressive forces" to wage a united fight against the BJP and the RSS on the basis of issues and ideology. He reminded the gathering of nine political parties "not to convert a political fight into a mere clash of personalities".

The TMC support for UPA or Biju Janata Dal's support for NDA are surprises which seem to indicate the kind of surprises in store in 2019 Lok Sabha

election. The Left Front, already facing bleak future, seems compelled to sail with the Congress, however, odd it appears in the background of the Nuclear Deal issue in which it assumed an ideological posture and earned the admiration of several non-communists.

Yours etc.,  
Barnes Mawrie sdb,  
Via email

## RTI vis-à-vis Students

Editor,  
The Right to Information Act, 2005 (RTI Act) is the most pivotal legislation ensuing to secure rights of the citizens to have access to information under the control of public authorities with some exceptions to information which are barred under the said Act. It is rightly said that an informed citizenry is the backbone of successful democracy. RTI has been an important tool for the citizen to be informed about the public affairs thereby promoting accountability and transparency in the functioning of the government.

When the RTI is viewed vis-à-vis students, its scope and ambit has been questioned. There was a time when Boards and Universities did not allow its students to have access to their own answer scripts even after the declaration of the results. Such practice continued even after the enforcement of RTI Act, 2005 for the reason that any move made by the students seeking photocopies of their respective answer scripts were resisted by Universities and Boards causing hardship

to the aggrieved students and preventing them from availing the remedies against erratic evaluation and also for re-assessing their performance in improving their answer presentation. Such a situation had indeed forced some of the students to go for litigation and the judicial decisions were in their favour.

Yours etc.,  
Aneeta Synrem  
Shillong-1

to the aggrieved students and preventing them from availing the remedies against erratic evaluation and also for re-assessing their performance in improving their answer presentation. Such a situation had indeed forced some of the students to go for litigation and the judicial decisions were in their favour.

The Apex Court in the case of CBSE vs Aditya Bandopadhyay and others observed that the evaluated answer-sheets are covered under the definition of "information" [reported in (2011) 8 SCC 497.]. Now the students are entitled to get photocopies of their answer scripts under the RTI. This would facilitate them to re-assess their performance and further to improve their performance for future examination. But the irony that in our state many students are not aware of this right.

My suggestion is that the Boards and the Universities functioning in our state may enlighten the students about their right to get photocopies of their respective answer scripts by uploading notification in this regard in its official web-site and also get such information printed at the reverse side of examination admit card of the students.

Yours etc.,  
Aneeta Synrem  
Shillong-1

Yours etc.,  
Aneeta Synrem  
Shillong-1

(The author is Former Director, ICSSR, New Delhi)

Yours etc.,  
Aneeta Synrem  
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## Power For All Right resolve, but tough

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

The government's resolve to provide electricity to every household in the country by May next year is well meaning but achieving the target seems rather tough. There are still 300 million people in the country who are starved of electricity, as stated by President Mukherjee recently in Kolkata. And even though the work is moving in the right direction at a steady pace, it may take another year or at least nine more months to accomplish the target.

At the same time, even this would be a big achievement for the Modi government and the country can claim to enter a new era. However, to receive sustained power supply for at least four hours a day for every household will take longer at least in some regions. Indeed, sustained supply of power is essential as education spreads and so also micro entrepreneurial units which get set up in residential places in the villages.

The emphasis on non-conventional uses of power is well known and the country has moved ahead in generation of solar power. However, there is an ongoing debate whether we should opt for nuclear or solar power. The former was envisaged about a decade back when it was less costly than solar power, but now the situation has changed. With induction of latest technology, solar power is now less costly than N-power.

During the UPA era, it was stated that nuclear power would cost no more than Rs 2.50 per unit but presently the negotiated tariff at the two new Russian reactors at Kudankulam 3 and 4 is Rs 6.30 per unit. The cost of power of the new reactors of Areva would not be less than Rs 7 per unit.

These rates are much higher than the present pricing of solar power which is a maximum of Rs 3 to Rs 3.50 per unit and, according to experts, may further come down to around Rs 2.50 per unit by the early next year. One may mention here that the 500 MW Bhadla Solar Park in Rajasthan saw prices drop to Rs 2.44 per unit, well below thermal tariffs or even the average Rs 3.20 per unit rate of the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC).

A point that needs to be mentioned here is that as solar is dependent on the sun, which is available for say 12 hours or so, intermittency will be a problem when solar generation starts accounting for 15 to 20 per cent of overall supply of power. Thus, we may be some distance away from that. However, many low-cost smart policies and technological improvements can be initiated to improve the grid for tomorrow.

A report by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy stated that the country increased its capacity for solar energy production by about 5.5 GW between April 2016 and March 2017 against a target of 12 GW. Thus achieving the target of 100 GW by 2022 appears to be too over ambitious.

The solar revolution has yet to take place, notwithstanding the Metro in Kerala, and predictions reveal that after a decade, the situation is expected to improve. Thus, the target for generation of 100 gigawatt of solar power by 2022 may not be achieved. The entire scientific community has been galvanised to accept the challenge and more sincere action by the States is necessary. Moreover, implementation of roof-top solar is taking place at a much slower pace and it seems unlikely that the government would achieve its 40 GW target by 2022, as per a report by the PGD Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Meanwhile, there are reports of the government having approved Rs 70,000 crore nuclear energy

generation on capacity and a new transparent policy for fuel supply for thermal power plants. It is understood that India will set up 7000 MW of nuclear capacity with 10 units of indigenous pressurised heavy water reactor technology, according to Power Minister Piyush Goyal. This marks India's biggest expansion in nuclear power. Currently 6780 MW will be a flagship 'Make in India' project. However, as indigenous sources would be marshalled without any foreign tie-up, the results may be encouraging as there are expectations of achieving economies of scale and generation of over 33,000 direct and indirect jobs.

One has to admit that the development on renewable sources of power has been on the right track and Indian scientists and engineers deserve credit. On the other hand, the technology for coal-based power generation has to be improved so as to cut down costs and use local coal after washing them. Low emission technology of such power plants is needed as we cannot increase our carbon emission any further.

The renewable era has begun and electricity generation in the villages would be from medium level solar plants that would be cost effective and long lasting. In fact, roof tops over apartments have to be used for solar power generation in a big way that could meet at least 40 to 50 per cent of their power needs.

The government is in the process of restarting the stalled hydro power projects and increase the wind energy production target to 60 GW by 2022 from the current 20 GW. One cannot deny the fact that the country needs considerable investment to build a reliable and adequate energy supply chain. Resources currently allocated to energy supply may not be sufficient for narrowing the between energy needs and energy availability.

With demand for energy growing at the rate of 8 to 9 per cent against production increasing at around 3 per cent, reaching electricity to the common man at affordable costs is the biggest challenge before the government. India had assured that it would be in a position to meet its non-fossil fuel-based energy target if it got adequate financial and technological support, the chances of which appear somewhat remote with the US exiting from the Paris accord.

Though foreign aid in this direction has been rather insignificant, there has to be constant endeavour to ensure that experimentation has to be carried out in all areas of renewable energy -- not just solar but also nuclear, wind and hydro power -- to ensure economies of scale. Moreover, modernisation of thermal power plants and using indigenous coal without importing it has to be ensured in the not-too-distant future.

A nation develops when power is available to all of its citizens. As education spreads far and wide and as entrepreneurship develops at the grass-root level, there is need for electricity in all households. It is indeed distressing that though we have completed 70 years of independence, the generation has only picked up only in the last few years.

Power can empower the nation and thus the endeavour of the government is noteworthy. But the selection of sources needs to be drawn, keeping in view the cost factor. India is a nation where around 55 per cent of the population belong to the poor and the economically weaker sections and they have to be provided electricity at subsidised rates. Nothing short will suffice. ---INFA

*"Can there be a love which does not make demands on its object?"*

--- Mangnu Hirschfield

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 317 SHILLONG, THURSDAY, JUNE 29, 2017

### Eternal vigilance

ON the 42nd anniversary of the declaration of Emergency in 1975, Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasised the need for eternal vigilance as the price of liberty. But this is perhaps one-sided considering what happened to the teenager, Junaid Khan who was killed in a train as he was going home after doing his Eid shopping. The murder was said to have been caused by a dispute over seats. But the aggressors defended themselves saying that Junaid Khan and his companions ate beef which made them anti-national. The Prime Minister should be asked if eternal vigilance should not be applicable to members of the minority community who are often victims of such atrocities. In actual fact, he and BJP Chief Ministers of states preserve a convenient silence over such mob murders. Rajasthan appears to be the only exception. The BJP government at the Centre should be particularly concerned as these murderers incited by communal passions argue that they are carrying out the wishes of the government and even of Prime Minister Modi.

Why do the Prime Minister and his party not come out in the open with articulate condemnation of such heinous acts? They should make it clear that the perpetrators of such crimes are not doing so in pursuance of their policy. Action to punish the killers should be swift and drastic. There should be no attack on faiths, ethnicities and castes. The atrocity that blighted the traditional Eid Milan this year is tragic and shameful and no better than the repressive policy under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's Emergency. The BJP government has to answer for the untimely death of Junaid Khan.

### LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

## Assam govt willing on central representative in talks

The Assam Government is willing to have a central representative in the discussions with the agitating All Bodo Students' Union to help resolve the Bodo problem. The State Government was not making it a "prestige issue", Assam Home Minister Mr Bhrigu Kumar Phukan told Minister of State for Surface Transport Mr Rajesh Pilot here today.

Mr Phukan requested the Congress(I) not to

encourage subversive activities in the state. A State Government release and Mr Pilot assured Mr Phukan of all assistance in resolving the problem. Mr Phukan also discussed with Mr Pilot, who is chairman of the AICC (I) coordination committee for Assam, the implementation of the Assam Accord. Mr Phukan regretted that the site for setting up the proposed central university had been selected without consulting his Government.

# Gorkhaland Would Complete Geographical Definition of the North-East Region

By Mahendra P Lama

The demand for Gorkhaland has erupted once again. This is the third occasion in the last 30 years, this time in a much more vocal, sweeping and determined manner. People seem to have taken the leadership. There are five primary reasons attributed to this new movement.

First, the idea of autonomous councils like Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) in 1988 and the present Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) as a solution to statehood has failed and collapsed. Both DGHC under Subash Ghising and GTA under Bimal Gurung suffered from the same syndrome. Bengal kept them deprived in every respect: handing over of agreed departments, power, functions, finance, orientations and external support. Both the Chairmen ran DGHC and GTA as their personal fiefdom without any plans, audits and evaluation. They remained totally unaccountable and beyond any scrutiny. Both became the symbol of violence, fear and revenge and opted for safer option of sending members of parliament from outside the hills. Bengal Government coordinated with both to systematically demolish well-known institutions. All these created a deep sense of insecurity among the people. Neither Gorkhaland was in sight nor development ever happened. People at large lost both ways.

Second, if Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh and Telangana could happen without much fuss, why not Gorkhaland? Gorkhaland as a new state would complete the geographical definition of the North-East region. If Sikkim and Assam are parts of the North-east, then why not the contiguous Darjeeling district and the Dooras? The political history of the demand for Gorkhaland dates back to 1907. The memorandum submitted by the Hillmen's Association to Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India, on October 25, 1930, states in detail why the hill people wanted to remain outside Bengal. The bestowing of 'partially excluded area' status to Darjeeling district in the pattern of 'excluded area'

extended to most of the regions in the North East by the British India was actually the recognition of its uniqueness within Bengal.

Demands were vociferously made including before the Simon Commission and the State Reorganization Committee in early 1950s. Over the years, this demand acquired much more dynamic dimensions including the national security angle as this is the only district that has three international borders with Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal and little north with China too. In fact, the entire North East region of India is connected by this district through Chicken Neck corridor.

Third, the last 30 years have clearly shown that the Bengal government's interest in Darjeeling is only skin deep. It continues to treat most parts of Darjeeling and the Dooras as an 'internal colony'. This attitude was reflected most clearly in the way the government tried to hurriedly impose the Sixth Schedule status on Darjeeling in 2005. All the economic activities including tea, cinchona, tourism and educational hubs literally became sick. For the Gorkhaland agitators, this proved to be the last straw. The three-tier Panchayati Raj was disbanded in Darjeeling hills in early 1990s and the development funds to rural areas, including tea gardens, literally dried. Hardly any central government projects reached there. The steady rise of Sikkim economically has had a serious effect on the Darjeeling region. Every one there now feels that the only way to ensure development for the hill people is to let them have a constituent state of their own.

Both the Gorkhaland agitation of 1980s and during 2007-2011 covered the terai and plains of Siliguri and also the Dooras region of Jalpaiguri district. However, while signing the Tripartite agreements both the leaders totally sidelined these deprived geographies. Meanwhile, the Bengal Government did

pour maximum resources to the terai and the plains and set up institutions like Mahakuma Prishad and Siliguri-Jalpaiguri Development Boards.

Fourth, in the last five years of GTA, it cried hoarse about the power and functions that were promised in the Tripartite Agreement. The state government just did not bother as it found the GTA leadership incapable of delivering goods, corrupt and disruptive and of course not in tune with the ideals of Trinamool Congress. What really offended the hill people and Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) was the Chief Minister desperately trying to plant and cultivate its own caste based Development Boards that divided the entire hill community into bits and pieces. Instead of reviving the constitutionally provided institution of three-tier Panchayati Raj as elected institution of delivery, the Trinamool Government started funding these unelected and make-shift Boards without even bothering about long term consequences in the region's cultural ecology.

More seriously this turned the entire development model into total incrementalism and patronisation and the fiefdom started shifting to the Chief Minister of Bengal from the 'Chief Minister of Gorkhaland'. The clash was inevitable. Bengal's thinking about the hills became more myopic and action rather petty and condemnable. Meanwhile, GJM brought the BJP for the second time to Bengal's crucial northern entry point by successfully supporting its candidate for the Lok Sabha election in 2009 and 2014. Its larger ramifications in the state politics was very palpable when the Chief Minister started frequenting Darjeeling hills during all seasons. The number of visits she made to the hills during 2011-2017 could be equivalent to what all the Chief Ministers of Bengal did in the last 65 years. Sadly, all these visits had only plethora of announcements and literally nothing on the ground.

Finally, DGHC and GTA stole the most valuable time in the lives of two generation of talented youths. The level of frustration is peaking with

all the traditional means of livelihood getting uprooted. No major national and international development and investments agencies could attempt to go to Darjeeling. This round of movement is, therefore, likely to be more fierce and violent as more than any political party it is this critical mass of youth with no future which has taken over the cudgels of agitation. They come from across various communities - Marwaris, Biharis, Bengalis, Koche-meches, Rajbonshis, Adivasis and Gorkhas. The mainstream political parties are nowhere to be seen now. The presence of local, national and international media is a major boost to the movement.

The Left Front government had called the GNLF movement 'anti-national' that ignited it to a frown blown conflict in 1980s. The Trinamool Government again brought some unbelievable notions of "insurgents" and "foreign hands". If this state constructed narrative becomes popular it could be more fatal to the integrity of Bengal. It amounts to literally welcoming 'second partition of Bengal'. The emergence of a dangerously communal outfit like 'Amra Bangali' had actually exacerbated the situation during 2007-2011.

Gorkhaland, as the 30th State of India, will be one of the most developed states in the country. This state can generate millions of dollars by just managing the economic transactions in the border areas. Darjeeling, as a brand-name, is well known all over the world. If rightly repositioned, it would attract a large number of multi-national companies and both domestic and foreign investors.

*[The author is the Founding Vice Chancellor of Central University of Sikkim and also a former member of National Security Advisory Board of Government of India. He teaches at the Jawaharlal Nehru University and also at the Sichuan University in China]*

# Darjeeling is clamouring for statehood

By K.K.Muktan

The silent hills of Darjeeling are reverberating with clamours once again. The Bengali language policy recently announced by the West Bengal Government stoked the latent ember of Gorkhaland making the Gorkhas restive once again with their old demand for Gorkhaland. It is more than twelve days now that the agitation is going on; three innocent Gorkhas lost their lives in police firing; Bimal Gurung, the Chief of Darjeeling Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (DGTA) and his deputies resigned en-masse from their offices and burned down the DGTA Accord; the all party meeting held on 13th June including the BJP unanimously passed a resolution in favour of Gorkhaland. But Mamata Banerjee, Chief Minister of West Bengal remained conspicuously non-committal till date, in complete disregard of the volatile situation. As the indefinite agitation is allowed to prolong, the demand for Gorkhaland is growing louder and spreading wider every day with the spontaneous support from Gorkhas living in other parts of India, like Delhi, Dehradun, Uttarakhand and Sikkim. From the Northeast too, Gorkhas of Assam,

annum from the Chogyal of Sikkim for the purpose of sanatorium. For over one hundred years Darjeeling was classed as a 'Non-regulated Area', where the Acts and Regulations of the British Raj did not apply. From 1935 till independence of India in 1947 the district of Darjeeling enjoyed the privilege of a 'Partially Excluded Area' like some hill districts of the Northeast. The indigenous people of Darjeeling like the Gorkhas, Sikkimese, Bhutias and Lepchas were allowed to live with their respective cultures and traditions, least affected by the plains below. Today, all the North Eastern hill districts which were classed as 'Partially Excluded Areas' became full-fledged states under the Constitution of India and are developing according to their aspirations. But Darjeeling is still a district under West Bengal, stripped of all her autonomy, equity, justice and right to self-determination enshrined in the Constitution.

The demand of Darjeeling Gorkhas for a separate administrative unit is one of the oldest and has been hanging fire for more than a century. The first voice raised by them was in 1907 when the Darjeeling Hillmen's Association had submitted a memorandum to

**The demand was re-iterated in 1917 by submitting another memorandum to the Secretary of state of India. In 1929 Darjeeling Hillman Association raised the demand before the Simon Commission for separation of Darjeeling from the province of Bengal. Then again in 1952 the All India Gorkha League, under the Presidentship of N.B.Gurung, met Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India at Kalimpong and prayed for separation of Darjeeling from Bengal.**

Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh have joined the bandwagon with active support from the local organisations.

The Gorkhaland concept is now getting wider support, both from Gorkhas and non-Gorkhas, because the demand has been perceived to be not motivated by any political interest or for economic development, but for the genuine cause of ethnic identity of the Indian Gorkhas living in India which, they feel, is at stake. It is the socio-cultural and ethno-linguistic factors that have driven the Gorkhas to aspire for a home land, like any other Indian community, to call it their own state in India where they have lived for generations, loved dearly and made supreme sacrifices for her freedom, sovereignty, integrity and internal security. The Gorkhas are a peace loving and law abiding community and they can assimilate well with their neighbours, and for that matter, they do not harbour any animosity towards the Bengalis or any other community. But they are proud of the glorious history of their redoubtable Gorkhas in Indian army and intensely possessive of their distinct language, culture and traditions.

The small territory of Darjeeling, the name adulterated from 'Dorje-ling' (meaning place of thunderbolt) originally part of Sikkim; was once a part of the Nepalese kingdom (1780 to 1815), and was subsequently restored to Sikkim in 1815 under the treaty of Segowli. It was taken over by the British in 1835 on lease of Rs.6000 per

the Morley-Minto Reforms Commission demanding for a separate administrative unit. The demand was re-iterated in 1917 by submitting another memorandum to the Secretary of state of India. In 1929 Darjeeling Hillman Association raised the demand before the Simon Commission for separation of Darjeeling from the province of Bengal. Then again in 1952 the All India Gorkha League, under the Presidentship of N.B.Gurung, met Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India at Kalimpong and prayed for separation of Darjeeling from Bengal. In 1980 Indra Bahadur Rai, President of Prantia Parishad submitted a memorandum to Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India praying for separate state for Indian Gorkhas.

Thus the Gorkhas of Darjeeling have never stopped praying, demanding, clamouring and even dying in police firing for the sake of a separate state of Gorkhaland which alone could fulfil their aspiration. It is, therefore, a long standing demand of the Darjeeling Gorkhas which is supported by six million Indian Gorkhas living in different parts of the country, as a crucial issue involving their ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity.

The Governments in the state and the centre needs to view with due concern and consideration and evolve a viable solution to this long standing problem. *(The writer is a retired civil servant of the Govt of Meghalaya)*

### TO THE EDITOR

## SCC - messengers of peace and love

Editor,

Apropos the report, "A family's pilgrimage of love to the temple of music (ST June 26, 2017), I was surprised to know of the coverage about our short but memorable visit to Shillong last week and then to read it in the online edition of The Shillong Times. The Shillong Chamber Choir goes beyond music and while there is no doubt that they are blessed with musical genius, they are wonderful people - full of warmth and love. My family and I plan to repeat this "pilgrimage" often. The Shillong Chamber Choir is not just a gift to our nation, but they are clearly messengers of peace and love wherever they travel.

Shillong has a treasure for the world to enjoy. I sure will be back for more.

Yours etc.,  
Nagaraj Prasad  
Sukhumvit Soi 13  
Bangkok 10110  
Thailand

## Traffic snarls - serious cause of concern

Editor,

Through the esteemed column of your newspaper, I want to draw the attention of the concerned authorities

towards the traffic problem in our city.

It's a fact that the traffic problem in the city is increasing by the day and is poses grave danger to the lives of citizens. The daily commute on the roads of Shillong is becoming longer and more grueling day by day. This depicts the failure of public transportations infrastructure to keep pace with growing development activities in the city. In fact, studies have shown, more than twenty five thousand vehicles are plying almost every day on most of the important corridors of the city, which is more than double compared to the norm numbers. Another major cause is that the city roads are characterized by mixed traffics, which include buses, trucks, maxi taxis, three wheelers, two wheelers and private/personal vehicles. This creates problems for traffic management and leads to delays in movement of traffic.

Now, what should be the role of Government in controlling traffic in the city? To meet this serious crisis, some measures can be taken by the Government like, construction of new roads, foot bridges, widening of existing roads network and most importantly construction of flyovers, and also promoting traffic rules through educations, advertisements and strict

enforcement. And, last but not the least encouraging people to walk and cycle.

Yours etc.,  
Shyamal Dey,  
Shillong - 1

## Obsession with fair skin!

Editor,

Your editorial, "India's fatal flaw" (ST, June 28, 2017) is right in pointing out that we swoon over white skin, so much so, that fairness creams for both women and men are one of the fastest selling products in the market. This is not just because of our "colonial baggage" as has been suggested by your editorial but because of our obsession with white Aryan ancestry. It is because of such obsession that our brothers and sisters from North East in spite of their having fair complexion face racial comments like "Chinky" (ie a person with non-Aryan features) in many parts of our country. Whereas a German even with poor knowledge of English gets our admiration as "Sahib!" It is his Aryan like features (sharp nose as well as white complexion etc.) that attracts our admiration. Such bias in our mindsets helps politicians with a fair complexion and also from North India to score over their counterparts in national

politics.

Yours etc.,  
Sujit De,  
Kolkata

## NPA crisis and farmers' woes

Editor,

The menace of mounting bad loans or Non Performing Assets (NPA) of banks have had a cumulative effect on our GDP resulting in slowing credit flow to industry. Our country needs stable and sound banking system for healthy growth of the economy. A loan account becomes sub-standard and is called NPA, if a borrower does not pay three instalments continuously. The big corporate defaulters often escape easily from the regulator's scanner despite clarion call by lenders. They have diverted loans taken for specific purposes by using regulatory backlash. And the plight of small farmers is India's bitter seeds with massive crop failure and farmers' suicide in the low rainfall region of southern/central India. Both Govt and lenders should come forward to obviate farmers' need to look at the heavens every season. India's agriculture sector contributes 16% of GDP but it is a pity that farm produce is even sold below the minimum support price

(MSP). The rural distress in difficult situations often prompts states to offer relief to reduction or complete waiver of loans. What we need is policy for long term effectiveness.

India's stress assets are nearing 10 lakh crore. Vijay Mallya packed his bags, purchased a flight ticket and fled to London. This would have been difficult in China. The country has toughened restrictions on 60 lakh bank defaulters, barring them from travelling by flights to high speed trains, getting loans and credit cards or even promotions. Can India think about isolating these defaulters through strict regulations? The biggest hindrance to effective operation of Indian lenders' got choked by ballooning of NPA. To crack down on loan defaulters cabinet cleared a new ordinance to speed up NPA resolution process in a time bound manner; winding up of companies and recovery of secured loans. Amendment of banking regulation act will empower RBI to take action against defaulters under bankruptcy code. RBI recently identified 50 big corporate defaulters amounting to 25% of gross NPA and is planning to issue directions to banks to file for insolvency. The banks are to be given more powers to deal with acquired liquidity during post-demonetisation. Earlier bank took years to recover the assets under SARFAESI Act of 2002. But now it is

amended in 2016. RBI also opened loan restructuring scheme to check the menace of NPAs.

If this continues then both NPAs as well as restructured loans of banks may stand at 10% of Gross NPA. And PSU banks are the worst hit. They reported sharp fall on denting profits. Already Rs 1.14 lakh crore of bad loans had been written off by state-owned banks between 2013 and 2015. High provisioning figures further eat away from their profits. The gravity of the problem is such that finance ministry and RBI may consider setting up a 'bad bank' to deal with this. There may be one time settlement for big defaulters leading to write-off of NPAs. At the same time pushing more lending to Agriculture sectors, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) will promote start-ups and entrepreneurship programme towards keeping the Indian economy upbeat and then India will flourish. Investing in programmes like watershed project might bring oases in the low rainfall regions that would bring cheers to rural economy and both farmers and banks will reap a good harvest.

Yours etc.  
Kamal Baruah  
Guwahati

*"Love is a conflict between reflexes and reflections."*

--- William R. Alger

## The Shillong Times

Vol No: LIX No. 318

SHILLONG, FRIDAY, JUNE 30, 2017

### China up in arms!

INDIAN and Chinese troops are once again in an eyeball to eyeball conflict in the Sikkim section on the Line of Actual Control. It led to a suspension of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra via the new Nathu La route. Chinese troops intruded into Indian territory and destroyed two Indian army bunkers near the Lultan Post. A flag meeting was held on June 20 but there was no rapprochement between the two sides. The Chinese side rudely indicated that they would not relax their restriction on a great many Indian pilgrims carrying out the annual pilgrimage by the Nathu La Route which they had been doing since 2015. The Chinese claim that it was a reprisal against Indian troops unnecessarily making an incursion into Chinese territory. It is true that the Nathu La route was opened by the Chinese in 2015 which greatly facilitated the journey of pilgrims to the holy destination at Mansarovar every year. The new Yatra route was apparently opened by Beijing to show a mark of respect to Hindu religious sentiments and deepen ties with the new BJP government under Narendra Modi. It is not surprising that Beijing has now taken an about turn on the issue. Their ways are always unpredictable.

Admittedly the Chinese leadership often shows an aggressively big brotherly attitude to the Indian government. For instance, the state controlled Chinese media has attacked Delhi against India's dedicated air freight corridor with Afghanistan. It is oblivious of the fact that Pakistan intrudes on India's land access. It is time that India put sufficient pressure on China to end border disputes with India which should be in Beijing's interest. India's diplomatic stance has now been strengthened as US President Donald Trump has unequivocally taken India's side in its contretemps with China.

### LOOKING BACK

March 27, 1989

### 'Rajiv may call poll in June'

Bharatiya Janata Party vice-president Mr Sundar Singh Bhandari today said Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi might hold the general election in the country before June this year. Addressing a news conference here, Mr Bhandari said the recent proclamation of the President's Rule in Karnataka indicated that Mr Gandhi would prefer an early poll in the country.

He said Mr Gandhi was very much perturbed as the

image of the Congress (I) had been "trainshed" and his personal credibility was "at stake." Mr Bhandari described as "anti-democratic and politically motivated" the proclamation of President's Rule in Karnataka. He said although the speakers' conference and legislative conference in the country had clearly said that the majority of a ministry should be proved on the floor of legislature, no such step was taken in case of Karnataka.

# Our tribal past; Our civil present and Our human future

By Patricia Mukhim

We live in a world of transferred resentments where anger whether real or feigned, about the coming of the railway line to Byrnihat is transferred to government establishments, vehicles and on non-tribal (sorry about using this phrase) residents of Meghalaya. While the destruction of government property can be rationalised since the pressure group/groups hold the government accountable for the perceived misadventure of bringing the railway line to Byrnihat, it is difficult to comprehend why non-tribal properties are targets of petrol bombing? Non-tribals wonder why they are soft targets every time there is a social outrage about some issue or the other. During the Iiner Line Permit (ILP) agitation some years ago some innocent small time non-tribal businessmen were burnt alive. Yet when such issues are raised to remind ourselves of our past acts of violence, there is a section of self-professed Khasi intellectuals who sneer and say that the youth of today don't want to be reminded of that sordid past because they wish to get on with life. It's like asking the Jews to forget the holocaust! This might be a strong metaphor but the point one wishes to drive home is that history cannot be deleted just because some people can't face up to their dark, ominous deeds. And need I remind readers that those who choose to forget history are condemned to repeat it?

We are oft reminded of the age old philosophy that we emerged from the state of nature by binding ourselves together in a social contract (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau et al) to establish the institution of government. In doing so we also signed away some of our freedoms in order to bring order in society. But as Hume and Hegel point out, the ability to enter into a contract presupposes that the tribes

(a) already know the use of language (b) have a sense of obligation towards the contract signed (c) recognize and accepts the other. But the 'other' did not exist in that primeval state of nature. And then before we knew it we became part of a nation of diverse population and races who were all "other." We were told that the goalposts have shifted. From implicitly trusting our tribal chieftains who had led us for years we were given a Constitution, in the crafting

of which we had no hand. That confusion continues to confound us. And even today we swing dangerously on a pendulum, each time returning to a romanticised past and then coming back to a demanding present and imagining a challenging future.

French philosopher, Rene Girard says a society without settled law or the instruments of negotiations will be wracked by conflicts. This is so true of Meghalaya. Here the law is applied in the breach. We have never learnt the art of negotiation but move straight to confrontation. The sacrificial victim (non-tribal) is chosen because he is excluded from the social order: he is the one we are entitled to kill and whose death will not initiate the cycle of revenge since all of us converge on wanting it. Those who believe in non-violence either have no voice or don't speak up because they are afraid of being ostracized by the community to which they belong. Girard calls this need to sacrifice the other as forced optimism which pushes the society to believe that the tribe's survival depends on the scapegoat whose death will wash away the accumulated doubts. In this manner societies have given birth to the unscrupulous optimists whose outlook cannot be rectified by arguments because they surround themselves with impregnable defences against the truth and garner whatever sphere of influence available to them so that it becomes dangerous to question their ideas.

So what we have is a continued kind of existential despair and a longing to retreat from the complexities of the greater, inclusive society with its constitution and its laws, rules and regulations to the primordial simplicity of the undifferentiated, tribe. Even when those primordial institutions are failing we like to believe that they work for us. It's like retreating to a safe cocoon where the outsider cannot enter and intimidate. Yet within that tribal cocoon there is an unnatural sense of

unhealthy exclusivity where the mind is fed on the same old arguments; where fresh ideas are murdered even before they germinate and from this cocoon emerge the self-proclaimed leaders who claim to be the saviours of those inside the cocoon, protecting them from the "other," who is caricatured as the bogeyman. For decades we have been led by people with no vision because this human cocoon (unlike the one which turns out a butterfly from a caterpillar) does not allow mental and intellectual growth. Inside this cocoon only vices such as greed and accumulation are allowed to grow.

From that cocooned position to evolve into our civil present is a wretched journey. No wonder a Maori chief who was so unsettled by the quick process of the white man's civilisational march summed it up as "A thousand years in a lifetime." The Maoris like the Khasis and other tribes never had the luxury of going through the evolutionary, civilisational processes to reach the present with its phenomenal challenges. That's the reason for our million dilemmas.

From the primordial cocoon we are suddenly catapulted to the era of modern citizenship where law is made legitimate by the consent of those who must obey it. And how did this consent come? It came through a political process where each person participated in the making and in enacting that law. Adherence to this commonly agreed law is what citizenship implies. This is also the genesis of civil society which is distinct from a religious society where laws are imposed on human societies from some divine force and not from an aggregate of human agreements. The law derived from the political system does not tell us what to do, but what not to do, thereby leaving us free to pursue our goals provided we don't violate that law.

And now before we know it, we have to deal with an uncertain future! How scary is that when we have not even processed our past and our present is assailed by constant doubts and fears! There dystopians in our midst envisage a future where the precious aspects

of human nature, namely freedom, friendship, love, marriage, childhood will no longer be found and we will be left with a bleak landscape bereft of the known consolations. That we are entering the era of trans-humanists and artificial intelligence and that we will be replaced by cyborgs who fit seamlessly into the new environment where old fashioned virtues and emotions have no place, is no longer an impossibility.

So how does a small tribe numbering less than a million and surrounded by larger groups with supposedly higher intelligence grapple with these realities? Should we not sit together and sort out our dilemmas instead of sulking in our cocoons? Should we continue to blame the 'other' even when he is now an intrinsic part of our lives? Can we still keep that significant 'other' out of our collective consciousness and continue to label him an outsider? Outsider to what? Outsider to whom? The non-tribal born and brought up here has as much stake as any Khasi, Jaintia and Garo to see that Meghalaya develops in a manner where human dignity is given its due. To consider the non-tribal who has spent three generations here as the 'other' is a zero-sum fallacy. To punish the non-tribal for a system turned warped by erroneous political decisions is camouflage we have used for a long time to cover up our own failures on the civilisational journey.

It's time for schools, colleges and universities to teach the basic lesson of acceptance of diversity and build capacities for engaging with people of all communities. This will drive out suspicion. Imagine if we were to live in a constant state of fear and are suspected of wrongdoing all the time! And if we are also punished for the fault of others! How would we live in that climate of fear and apprehension? That is the kind of climate that the non-tribal in Meghalaya experiences. If we expect sane Hindus to stand up against the current climate of oppressive violence then we too need to stand up and fight for the rights of our non-tribal brethren.

This ethos is part of every culture and ethnicity. To debate this ethos amounts to extreme humiliation and disrespect for the rights of a fellow citizen.

Yours etc.,  
Anjalee Balal Magar  
Via email

### Promise of affordable housing

Editor,

This refers to your thought-provoking article, "Housing for Villages - Titles & affordable key challenges" (ST - June 3, 2017). It is time high density structures with modern amenities be considered to replace urban slums. An enabling ecosystem can facilitate well-planned and Sustainable Urbanization that will adequately meet housing needs of the urban poor. One thing is clear that unless we have a holistic housing policy which addresses the full spectrum of requirements, ranging from ownership to rental accommodation and shared housing, universal housing will remain a distant dream.

Yours etc.,  
Vinod C. Dixit  
Ahmedabad - 15

# Not in those names!

By Ananya Guha

The murder of 16 year old Junaid was out of sheer spite against a boy whom the criminals understood to be someone not of their religious moorings. Hasn't North India been used to Eid celebrations, and the muezzin's call at a mosque? Is Islamic religion something new to the people there? The answer is obviously no, but the question is why are feelings such as these whipped up day after day? Why are similar happenings taking place in Uttar Pradesh, a bastion of conglomerate cultures? If we say it is done by politicians then it is necessary to examine how and to what extent politics and life are interwoven in India. If again it is a mad rush of hatred on some pretext of the 'other' for a community that people have an inveterate hatred or dislike for then such brazen killings are done, because the perpetrators know that there is some support

build up of an argument for anonymity in terms of caste, religion or race. If the teeming millions of India do not have a name in terms of such references then the India of a monolith will give way to that of quintessence.

It is also interesting to see how at this time there are other strange if not bizarre happenings, which show the class/caste upper hand eating into societal systems in the most obnoxious of ways. The recent episode in a Delhi club, asking a lady to leave because her dress (the jainsem) was not in proper decorum smacks of abysmal ignorance of the culture of others (a term now used in profusion, in present day contexts), high handedness smacking of elitism divested of all realities. Again using the word "servant" and then likening it to "Nepalis" is the worst and profane kind of negativism, and flaunting of self righteousness of upper classes and their misplaced

**Caste, class and religious obnoxiousness are working in devilish ways into Indian society as never before. The animosity towards the lower working class, the 'un' religious and Dalits, are sure signs of a regressive atavistic society. 'NotInMyName' will or should obliterate all these, because the name tag is doing or undoing all rights. The name tag is a dismal admission of votaries of misplaced power and bellicosity. I am citing these two disparate incidents to show that indeed, there is a method in ( their) madness. The country is ruled from one end, conveniently stops at one or two more where alignment is complete in 'cultural' terms. No, certainly not in my blessed name, nor in THOSE names also.**

somewhere. And if this support comes from those who rule the country and their henchmen there will be of course, a free for all. And this free for all, a rampant display of right, might and hateful viciousness is the order of the day, even when in a country people are pleading for protection of diversity.

The 'Not In My Name' protest held spontaneously across the country and abroad on 28th June 2017 is not an argument of rhetoric, but a plea for sanity, in a land whose people are becoming insane, stripped of logic and looking out for faces and habits of people not of their kind. That this difference is spilling blood and spouting the worst kind of diatribes, is also hallmark of a nation in regress and wallowing in darkness and benighted upholstery.

What has gone wrong? Was it always there and now since political dispensations have changed, there is a tacit understanding between people and power that this can, should and will happen. Or is it an inversion of history? We are no longer the infidels, they are! They called us so once upon a time. So the interplay of us and them, the other has been entangled in furious web of malice. But then, should this lead to killings? Yes when it is mob lynching. But mobs constitute each individual, and such individuals find time to gather and connect; which shows that their feelings of hatred for someone is at sync, with one another in an autodidact way. This is really dangerous, the instinctive presupposition that we hate 'them' and must lynch.

The 'NotInMyName' protest is to be seen as a

prudery. Are all Nepalis servants? So a 'servant' cannot enter your hallowed precincts!

Caste, class and religious obnoxiousness are working in devilish ways into Indian society as never before. The animosity towards the lower working class, the 'un' religious and Dalits, are sure signs of a regressive atavistic society. 'NotInMyName' will or should obliterate all these, because the name tag is doing or undoing all rights. The name tag is a dismal admission of votaries of misplaced power and bellicosity. I am citing these two disparate incidents to show that indeed, there is a method in ( their) madness. The country is ruled from one end, conveniently stops at one or two more where alignment is complete in 'cultural' terms. No, certainly not in my blessed name, nor in THOSE names also.

My point is the ruthless chicanery, the troubled practices, the prevarication of Indian history and religion, intolerance of 'lower castes' and Dalits, the obtrusive similes ( or metaphors) between religion and myth, the falsification of history that are taking place today, wrapped in the garb of secularism. The hatred for the 'other' ( not me!) is poured with vitriol. Above all the voiceless do not have a place in this spectrum of darkness. Only noises in shape of pro-poor policies exist. What happened to the rich with their tainted money? How much 'black' money was retrieved? The poor are getting poorer, the 'black' blacker! It is the nouveau-riche and the plutocrats playing these inauspicious games and flaunting love for a New India.

### TO THE EDITOR

### GST roll-out from July 1!

Editor,

GST, a new tax regime with huge publicity and trumpeting, grips India with mixed feelings of excitement, nervousness and apprehensions. Normally it is necessary to concede at least 6 month's time to notify all rules and procedures and give enough time to stakeholders, particularly the small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to successfully implement GST. The Government is going ahead with the implementation, without taking into account the readiness of the people to adapt to the new regime. The general public is deeply and seriously concerned about the government's lack of preparedness.

BSE Sensex has already plunged by 180 points recording its biggest fall in a month and there are jitters ahead of GST roll-out. The NSE nifty has also ended 63.6 points lower. With the GST roll-out drawing closer there has been a drop in the industrial manufacturing by the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) in the northeast. While the drop in manufacturing has been witnessed across segments, plastic industrial units have especially shown a significant decline. There has

been a 30-40% drop in sale, because they are not aware of the pros and cons of GST. GST is all also set to make vehicle leasing costlier.

The mythical assurance of "GST will not impact essential drugs stock" by the Government has been dispelled by the down-to-earth market situation. A majority (50-70%) of chemists and stockists across the country are not clear about GST aspects, and are yet to initiate implementation processes in their businesses, indicating possible drug shortages in certain therapies. Supply of certain medicines may get disrupted, particularly of high-value ones like oncology therapies, and those which have been launched recently, as chemists will maintain restricted inventory. But is there any guarantee that the essential and life-saving drugs/medicines will not be affected? The on-ground readiness of distributors and chemists to implement GST by July 1 unfortunately remains below par as has been revealed by a survey conducted by information and technology-enabled healthcare service provider, Quintiles IMS. In the opinion of this service-provider managing short-term disruption due to new tax regime will be challenging.

At the moment ground

realities are highly alarming. Essential commodities such as medicines are not available in many places and have started disappearing from the market throughout the country and prices of various commodities are rising for lack of clarity, creating a climate of all-pervading confusion, chaos and mismanagement.

It is also inexplicable as to why prime-mover fuels like petrol and diesel, which control transport of all essential commodities like food-grains & medicines and daily needs for mere survival of the majority of people of the country having low buying capacity, and which give rise to price-rise of all essential commodities, have been kept out of the ambit of GST? As of now for petrol and diesel the central excise is 23% and state VAT is 34%. Total tax is 57%. If these essential items are brought under GST, the maximum tax will be only 28%, which means the prices of petrol and diesel can come down by almost 50% and the public at large will be benefited. In a democratic country the Government is formed " of the people, by the people and for the people" as per the fundamental definition of democracy. How then can the Government and the ministers take a myopic view on the measures that would benefit people whom they are representing while

administering the country?

Is the Central Government in an unnecessary and undue haste to commit a historic blunder after demonetisation?

Yours etc.,  
Samarees  
Bandyopadhyay  
Advocate, Kolkata  
High Court  
Via email

### Delhi Golf Club incident!

Editor,

Apropos the headlines in your newspaper "Delhi golf club staff asks Khasi woman in 'maid's dress' to leave (ST June 27, 2017), the incident is highly condemnable. That a lady from Meghalaya, had to go through this unpleasant ordeal in the capital city of this vast country is pitiable and for this to happen in a country known for its great diversity and the second largest democracy in the world is appalling. That people don't look the same in terms of their body and facial features and in their body language is a well settled fact. It is illogical that people who are in the hospitality sector are not aware of this social reality. The Khasi traditional attire 'Jainsem' is a decent dress proudly worn by the female population in large